

THE MOTIVES OF SOUTH AFRICAN FEMALE PERPETRATORS FOR  
BECOMING DRUG MULES

by

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## DECLARATION

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I, the undersigned herewith declare that "THE MOTIVES OF SOUTH AFRICAN FEMALE PERPETRATORS FOR BECOMING DRUG MULES," is my own work, and that all the sources used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged with complete references.

Signed at Pretoria this \_\_\_\_\_ day of January 2020.

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Signature  
(LPM Klein)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

Colossians 3, Verse 17

This research is dedicated to my parents, Armstrong Klein, and Belinda Moleko. Your love and guidance are with me in whatever I choose to pursue. We have reached a full-circle moment. Your struggles and support have finally paid off, and I am because of you. Thank you.

To my son Khumo, I know you have never understood all the fuss but hopefully, one day, when you are older, you will. Thank you for giving me the space I needed to pursue this research as it meant we spent less quality time together. I love you, my boy.

Most notably, my stepfather, Khotso Moleko. Thank you for believing in me and encouraging me to keep studying. Thank you for always being available to read, edit, question and comment. Your support and input were invaluable! May your soul rest in peace (21 May 1954 – 30 April 2019).

To the rest of my family and friends, thank you for your support, encouragement, and unwavering belief in me even when I did not believe in myself - I treasure you all. To the research participants - this research was possible only because of your participation. Thank you all for trusting me with your life stories.

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## **SUMMARY**

The researcher aimed to examine female perpetrator motives for becoming drug mules. The aim was accomplished through the use of a qualitative study, case research. Collection of data occurred via semi-structured interviews with seven participants. Purposive sampling was employed to aid with the selection of participants, and thematic analysis used as a means to analyse the data collected. The study found that motivations differed amongst all participants; nonetheless, the primary findings indicate that participants chose to become drug mules mainly due to financial strain. The other themes identified included monetary rewards and the influence of social networking relationships. The most common finding was the involvement of Nigerians in all participants becoming drug mules. Further research, and the need for intensive educational drives in communities and schools regarding drug mules, formed the recommendations derived from the study.

## **KEY TERMS:**

Drug mule, drug courier, illicit drugs, drug trafficking organisations, drug traffickers, victimisation, agency, Nigerians, war on drugs.

## **TSHOBOKANYO**

Boikaelelo jwa patlisiso eno ke go tlatlhoba mabaka a a dirang gore basadi ba ikamaganye le go tsamaisa diokobatsi tse di seng kafa molaong. Boikaelelo jono bo fitheletswe ka go dirisa patlisiso e e leng kaga boleng,, go dirisiwa boemo jo go ithutiwang ka jone ka ntlha ya gore ke jone bonang le dintlha tse di tlhokegang, tse di maleba mme di re naya dintlha tse di feletseng kaga se go batlisisiwang ka sone. Patlisiso eno e kaga basadi ba le supa bao re kgonneng go batlisisa ka bone. Patlisiso eno e sekaseka kafa batsayakarolo ba tshelang ka gone go ya kafa ba tlhalositseng ka gone,, go akareletsa le tsela eo ba neng ba tshela ka yone fa ba sale bannye le ka moo ba godileng ka gone, ga mmogo le botshelo jwa bone jwa jaanong le ka moo ba tshelang ka gone jaaka batsamaisi ba diokobatsi tse di seng kafa molaong. Patlisiso eno gape e sekaseka le kwa ba tswang teng, seemo sa bone sa loago le ikonomi, ba lelapa ga mmogo le ditsala tse ba ikopanyang le tsone, patlisiso eno e batlisisitse le gore

a go na le dilo dipe tse dingwe tse di bakang gore ba tsamaise diokobatsi tse di seng kafa molaong.

Go kgobokanya tshedimosetso go dirilwe ka go dira dipotsolotso le batsayakarolo ba supa. Setlhopha se se tlhophiwang se dirisiwa go tlhopha batsayakarolo. Ka ntlha ya gore setlhogo seno ke kaga batsamaisi ba diokobatsi, mokgwa ono o ne o le maleba go tlhatlhoba batsayakarolo ba ba oketsegileng. Mmatlisisi o akanyeditse gore a botsolotse batho ba ka nna lesome, kwa bofelong go ile ga nna le basadi ba ka nna sometlhano ba ba ileng ba kopiwa go tsenela patlisiso eno mme ba le supa ke bone fela ba dumetseng go tsenela patlisiso eno. Go ile ga dirisiwa tlhatlhobo ya thematic e le go tlhatlhoba tshedimosetso e e kgobokantsweng. Le fa gone patlisiso e ne e le ka ga boemo jo go ithutiwang ka jone, tlhatlhobo ya thematic e nnile yone e e thusang thata ka gonne e ne e le bonolo go ka dirisiwa ka ntlha ya gore ke yone eo e nang le dintlha tse dintsi tseo di batlegang.

Mabaka a a dirang gore ba tlhophe tiro ya go tsamaisa diokobatsi a ne a sa tshwane go batsayakarolo botlhe le fa go ntse jalo go bonagetse gore lebaka la konokono leo le ba dirang ba tlhophe tiro eno ke ka ntlha ya mathata a madi/maemo a ikonomi a a sa tthomamang. E re ka mathata a madi le maemo a ikonomi a a sa tthomama di aname seo se ama motho yo o mo maemo ao fela thata, ke ka moo patlisiso e bontshitsheng gore maemo ao e ka nna a nako e telele kana a nako e e khutshwane. Mathata a tsa madi a nako e e telele a bakwa ke go tlhoka tiro nako e e telele le ditshono tse di tlhaelang tsa go bona tiro ka ntlha ya go sa nne le bokgoni jwa tiro, mme mathata a tsa madi a nako e khutshwane a bakwa ke ditiragalo tse di sa bonelwang pele tseo maemo a tsone a ka baakangwang ka bonako. Patlisiso e ne e bontsha lebaka le lengwe la go bo basadi bano ba dira tiro eno e ne e le ka gonne tiro eno e dira madi ka bonako ga e tshwane le tiro ya nako e e tletseng. Ba bontshitse gore ba tlhotlhelediwa le ke balosika, batho ba ba ratanang le bone ga mmogo le ditsala. Lebaka le lengwe le le kgatlang le le fitlheletsweng go batsayakarolo botlhe ke go nna le seabe ga Ma-Nigeria mo go direng gore ba tsamaise diokobatsing tse di seng kafa molaong. Patlisiso eno e tthomamisitse gore Ma-Nigeria ke one a a tshamekang karolo e kgolo mo tirong eno e re ka e le bone badiri ba diokobatsi tseno le gore ke bone ba ba nayang tiro eno ya go tsamaisa diokobatsi. Basadi botlhe ba ba dumetseng go tsenela patlisiso eno ba bontshitse bosupi jwa seno.

Go tllile go dirwa patlisiso e e tseneletseng ka ga batsamaisi ba diokobatsi. Go na le tshedimosetso e ntsi malebana le batsamaisi ba diokobatsi, segolobogolo jang mo basading. Ntle le seo, go tshwanetswe ga rutiwa batho mo go tseneletseng kaga batsamaisi ba diokobatsi mo baaging ga mmogo le kwa dikolong, thuto eno e tla lebisediwa thata kwa

malapeng, ba ba tlhokomelang malapa ka tsa madi ga mmogo le go ba thusa gore ba kgone go dira ditshwetso tse di siameng.

## ISIFINYEZO

Injongo yalolu cwaningo ukuhlola izimbangela ezenza abantu besifazane bashushumbise izidakamizwa. Le njongo iye yafezwa ngokusebenzisa uhlobo lokucwaninga lokuhlola ngokucophelela, kanye nocwaningo olumba lujule ngoba lushaya ngqo kulokho okucwaningwayo, lunembile futhi lunikeza isithombe esicacile sendaba ecwaningwayo. Leli phepha locwaningo lusekelwe ocwaningweni olwenziwe kwabesifazane abayisikhombisa. Lolu cwaningo luye lwahlola izindaba zokuphila zababambiqhaza njengoba babezilandisela bona ngokwabo, kuhlanganise isikhathi beseyizingane nendlela abakhuliswe ngayo, impilo yabo bengabantu abadala nokuphila kwabo njengabashushumbisi bezidakamizwa. Ucwaningo lugxile nasekuphileni kwabo kwangaphambili, izimo zomnotho nezenhlalo, umndeni nabangane, ucwaningo luye lwahlola ukuthi zikhona yini ezinye izinto okungenzeka ziyingxenye yezimbangela ezenza bashushumbise izidakamizwa.

Ukuqoqwa kwedatha kwenziwa ngezingxoxo ezihleliwe nababambiqhaza abayisikhombisa. Abacwaningi baye bazikhethela ngokwabo abantu abazobamba iqhaza. Ngenxa yokuthi isihloko sigxile kulabo abashushumbisa izidakamizwa, le ndlela ibifaneleka ukuze kuxoxwe nababambiqhaza abengeziwe. Umcwaningi obehlose ukuxoxa okungenani nababambiqhaza abayishumi, ekugcineni kuyiwe kwabayishumi nanhlano okuthe kubo kwaba nabayisikhombisa abavume ukubamba iqhaza. Indlela ehlakaniphile yokuhlaziya isetshenzisiwe ukuhlaziya idatha eqoqiwe. Nakuba ucwaningo belugxile ocwaningweni olumba lujule, ukuhlaziya okuhlakaniphile kube usizo ngoba bekuvumelana nezimo okusizile ekunikezeni idatha eneminingwane eminingi.

Izimbangela bezihlukile kubo bonke ababambiqhaza, noma kunjalo okuyinhloko okutholakele kulolu cwaningo kubonisile ukuthi ababambiqhaza bakhetha ukushushumbisa izidakamizwa ngenxa yokuthwala kanzima ngokwezomnotho nangokwezimali. Ngenxa yokuthi ukuthwala kanzima ngokwezimali

nangokwezomnotho kuyinto ebanzi futhi kuhlobana nomuntu othwele kanzima, kuye kwatholakala ukuthi ukuthwala kanzima ngokwezimali/ngokwezomnotho kungachazwa ngokuthi ukuthwala kanzima ngokwezezimali okuthatha isikhathi eside nokuthwala kanzima ngokwezimali kwesikhashana. Ukuthwala kanzima ngokwezimali okuthatha isikhathi eside kwenziwa ukuhlala isikhathi eside ungasebenzi kanye nokuntuleka kwamathuba emisebenzi ngenxa yokungabi namakhono, kuyilapho ukuthwala kanzima ngokwezimali kwesikhashana kudalwa izimo ezingalindelekile ezenza kudingeke isisombululo esisheshayo. Okunye futhi okutholakele ukuthi ababambiqhaza babekhuthazwa izinzuzo ezingokwezimali ukuthi bangaceba ngokushesha ngokungafani nokusebenza isikhathi esigcwele. Abantu abaphila nabo nsuku zonke bayingxenywe yembangela ebagqugquzele ukuba bashushumbise izidakamizwa, kulaba kungabalwa umndenini, ophathina babo nabangane abadlale indima ebalulekile ekuthonyeni abanye ababambiqhaza ukuba bashushumbise izidakamizwa. Okuthakazelisayo okutholakale kubo bonke ababambiqhaza ukuthi abantu abadabuka eNigeria babe nesandla ekubeni kwabo abashushumbisi bezidakamizwa. Ucwanningo luqinisekile ukuthi abase-Nigeria badlale indima enkulu ekubeni abaxhasi noma abagcini bezidakamizwa ezithuthwa ababambiqhaza. Lokhu bekufakazelwa yibo bonke ababambiqhaza okuxoxwe nabo.

Izincomo zalolu cwanningo zihlanganise ucwanningo olwengeziwe oluzokwenziwa kulabo abashushumbisa izidakamizwa. Alwanele ulwazi olukhona mayelana nabashushumbisi bezidakamizwa, ikakhulukazi kubantu besifazane. Ngaphandle kwalokho, kufanele kube nemikhankaso yokufundisa emiphakathini nasezikoleni ngokuphathelene nokushushumbisa izidakamizwa, le mikhankaso yokufundisa izogxila kakhulu emndenini, ezikhungweni ezinikeza kanye nasekwenzeni ukukhetha okufanele.

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

ANC	African National Congress
CRIMSA	Criminological and Victimological Society of Southern Africa
DCS	Department of Correctional Services
DIRCO	Department of International Relations and Cooperation
DTO	Drug Trading Organisations
EMCDDA	European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction
EU	European Union
ICD	Independent Complaints Directorate
INCSR	International Narcotics Control Strategy Report
ISS	Institute for Security Studies
LRAT	Lifestyle and Routine Activities Theory
OCCRP	Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project



ORTIA	Oliver Reginald Tambo International Airport
RCT	Rational Choice Theory
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
SACENDU	South African Community Epidemiology Network on Drug Use
SANCA	South African National Council on Alcohol and Drug Dependence
SAPS	South African Police Services
SIDS	Sudden Infant Death Syndrome
UN	United Nations
UNDCP	United Nations Drug Control Programme
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
USA	United States of America
WADS	West African Drug Syndicates
WHO	World Health Organization

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH MOTIVATION

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### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

*“South African drug mule sentenced to death in Vietnam” – Sowetan, 28 August 2018,*  
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*April 2017, “Family of SA drug mule on death row in Malaysia tell of anguish” –*  
*News24, 2 October 2015, “SA woman executed in China” – IOL, 12 December 2011.*

The above are, but a selection of headlines that of recent indicate an upward national trend reported in South African national newspapers, and indeed internationally. In 2016, for example, Tyrone Lee Coetzee was found guilty of smuggling drugs and handed a death sentence in Hanoi, Vietnam (Gous, 2018:np). Despite the threat of harsh penalties, the number of South Africans (and more so women) arrested abroad for the crime of drug smuggling is steadily rising. This upswing in occurrence raises important questions to wit: why do mules agree to function as smugglers, what motivates their choices, and what informs those choices? These questions are important as they speak to the core of what forms the basis of motivation and ultimately, choice in this regard. The idiom that comes to mind when one contemplates such actions is *‘what seems too good to be true, often is’*, and yet women remain susceptible to this form of criminal enterprise in a world where drug cartels operate and recruit in a way that offers them maximum protection, often leaving the drug mule to take the consequences of the entire enterprise. The problem is further compounded by improved technology used ‘legitimately’ to recruit for ‘illegitimate’ enterprises. For example, drug mules are at times lulled into compliance via job searches on popular websites, through the use of professionally conducted presentations, online job applications and other false information that lends the ‘business’ and its owners plausibility and legitimacy (Martel, 2013:20-29; Luong, 2015:40).

According to Peltzer, Ramlagan, Johnson and Phaswana-Mafuya (2010:9), since the advent of a new political dispensation, South Africa has experienced a steady increase

of individuals arrested abroad for drug smuggling. In 1994 alone there were two notable cases recorded of South Africans apprehended for drug smuggling at international ports. Vanessa Goosen, a well-known aspiring model, and Alexander Krebs were arrested a day before the country's first democratic elections in April 1994. Krebs was arrested for attempting to smuggle heroin out of Thailand and sentenced to death in Bangkok, but subsequently granted relief and his death sentence commuted to 100 years, and then to 40 years until he was formally granted amnesty on the 5<sup>th</sup> of December, 2012 by King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand. Krebs was released on the 28<sup>th</sup> of April 2012 (Medley& Pillay, 2012:np). Goosen, a 21-year-old Miss South Africa finalist, was arrested in 1994 at a Thailand airport for smuggling heroin in her luggage. She claimed that she was "...tricked into being a drug mule..." (Joseph, 2013:1).

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of February 2017, the SABC 3 documentary, *Special Assignment*, aired an episode entitled *The Last Run*. The main focus was people who were recruited and then worked as drug mules and who had been subsequently arrested and included interviews with various role-players who assist the families of those arrested abroad. The programme highlighted the scale of the South African drug mule phenomenon and demonstrated that mules frequently face arrest abroad, leaving behind distressed and shattered families who have limited options to assist their loved ones legally or emotionally. Although the programme offered a broad outline of drug mules and the industry in which they operate, it was understandably unable to provide a multifaceted commentary on drug trafficking, and drug mules and what motivates their choices.

When one considers drug cartels and the role of drug mules, the media has both a sword and shield effect. While it vilifies those arrested, it likewise brings the issue into social spaces and forces ordinary people and researchers alike to focus on potential causal factors relating to drug smuggling – particularly by women – and the dire consequences encountered by those who find themselves embroiled in the international operation of drug smuggling. More importantly, for this research, the spate of reported arrests creates a platform to contemplate why the crime continues even though the consequences are portrayed in the national and international media. Geldenhuys (2016a:30), emphasises, however, that growing media coverage and

awareness does not appear to have any deterrent effect if rising statistics are considered; and with the latter point, the researcher concurs.

This research aims to explore what motivates women to become drug mules, particularly when the risks are so high. Reports in national and popular media aside, there remains a paucity of research outlining the motives behind female perpetrators electing to become drug mules. Although the current lack of scientific research may present a lacuna to this study, it likewise highlights the need for a study of this nature and further future research.

### **1.1.1 Definitions and conceptual framework**

Drug dealers, drug traffickers, drug mules, drug couriers, body packer and drug smugglers are just a few of the popular terms used to describe a person who transports drugs across geographic borders. It is, therefore, necessary to clarify the meaning of concepts such as traffickers, mules, dealers, body packers and couriers before commencing with the research content and analysis.

Geldenhuys (2016b:15), defines drug trafficking as a criminal activity which involves the international movement of narcotic from manufacturing countries to the chief drug consuming nations, usually undertaken on a large scale and which may include global consignments. Both the European Union and the United Nations define drug trafficking as “...*the production, manufacture, extraction, preparation, offering, offering for sale, distribution, sale, delivery on any terms whatsoever, brokerage, dispatch, dispatch in transit, transport, importation or exportation of drugs.*” A drug trafficker can, therefore, be defined as a person involved in the cultivation, manufacturing, distribution and sale of illegal drugs; and a person that trades specifically in drugs (read in the context that drug trafficking is a trade albeit illegal) (Natarajan, Zanella & Yu, 2015:409). Opposed to a drug trafficker, a drug dealer is an individual illegally selling illicit drugs, usually within a limited geographical area (Aldridge & Décary-Héту, 2016:8).

According to Fleetwood (2015c:np) a drug mule can be defined as:

*“...someone who carries drugs across international borders. They typically undertake this specific role only, working under the instructions of others. Mules carry drugs*

*concealed in luggage, on their body or clothes, or swallowed in latex-wrapped capsules in order to avoid detection.”*

The term drug mule is understood to refer to individuals specially selected or sought out by drug syndicates to carry drugs intentionally or unwittingly from one country to another (Tsotetsi, 2012:1). The illicit substances are concealed, for example, in luggage, containers, strapped to a carrier's body, or carried internally after being swallowed. According to Geldenhuys (2016a:26), drug mules are human couriers used by drug trafficking syndicates to smuggle drugs. Hübschle (2014:43), adds that mules tend to carry from as little as a few grams of narcotics up to 10 kg on their person, and up to 2 kg if the drugs are swallowed. Drug mules are often not drug dealers but are, at least according to Hoffman (2015:np), often women. Body packers, according to Pramanik and Vidua (2016:33), are drug mules that transport drugs by swallowing or otherwise concealing them internally within their bodies.

Fleetwood (2009:104) posits that there is a lack of collective agreement on the use of the following terms: smuggler, trafficker, carrier, courier, and mule. She posits that the terms are used similarly to refer to offenders involved in various aspects of the transportation and distribution of drugs. While a variety of similar definitions were provided by the researcher here, the term drug mule will be used throughout this research as meaning a person specifically targeted to smuggle drugs, whether directly recruited or by being misled thereto (Van Heerden, 2014:1). In addition, *drug muling* will refer to the action of smuggling drugs even though the researcher acknowledges that 'muling' is not an acceptable verb form for 'mule.' The use of the former however supports ease of reading and brings a different nuance to the more commonly used verb form of 'drug smuggling.'

## **1.2 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY**

Female participation in drug trafficking is not a recent phenomenon and was reported and recorded as early as 1984 (Fleetwood, 2014:5). More recently, however, female drug mules have emerged as key figures in the transportation of drugs. A 2017 report by Interpol established that nearly 170 kilograms of drugs worth \$10 million were seized after being found hidden in luggage, concealed in shoe heels and hair, and/or swallowed by couriers in a sting operation code-named Folosa (Interpol, 2017:np).

Operation Folosa targeted drug trafficking from Latin America to Europe via Africa. The operation's results are noteworthy specifically for the discovery of a methamphetamine trafficking route from Nigeria to South Africa. Wicks (2016:np) confirms this finding and adds that Africa, and specifically South Africa, has become an important transit hub for Afghan heroin and Latin American cocaine. It is therefore probable that with Africa, and there in South Africa, becoming main transit hubs, that there will be frequent movement of illicit substances between points of origin, transportation and destination. The latter implies that syndicates will seek increased opportunities to smuggle drugs into and out of the continent. Luong (2015:44-45), highlights that incidents of women recruited by foreigners as drug mules have raised considerable concern at an international and national level and that drug syndicates specifically target women as they often garner the least suspicion from the airport and other transportation officials.

Van Heerden and Minnaar (2015:1) claim that statistically, South Africa is one of the leading transportation routes for narcotics such as cocaine and heroin in Africa. Tsotetsi (2012:1) further reports that South Africa has the highest number of prisoners in foreign countries arrested for drug trafficking crimes. In 2015, Hoffman (2015:np) from the Institute for Accountability in Southern Africa estimated that approximately 1 000 citizens are serving time in foreign jails, mainly for drug-related offences. Ledwaba (2016:np) however posits that the estimated total of South Africans incarcerated globally is underestimated and could be as high as 3 000, especially since some arrested individuals do not contact South African foreign missions after an arrest. Rahlaga (2017:np) reports that there are 880 South Africans imprisoned or awaiting trial in foreign countries after apprehension for smuggling drugs. Gerber - representing *Locked Up South Africa*, an NGO assisting South Africans in prisons abroad - questions the available statistics and claims that there are well over 1 000 South Africans in foreign prisons as a result of drug smuggling (Rall, 2017:np). Gerber alleges that there could be nearly 3 000 South Africans in foreign prisons for drug offences (Anon, 2017:np).

By contrast, the African National Congress' (ANC) National Policy Conference 2017 Peace and Stability Document, specifies that there are 6 440 foreigners in South African prisons, while South Africans in foreign prisons constitute only 14% of the

number of foreigners in South African prisons, specifically 910 as of May 2016. A search of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) website, which was last updated in 2014, did not yield valid results as to the number of South Africans imprisoned for drug-related offences abroad.

Unfortunately, little attention is given to statistical information in this regard, making the exact number of individuals incarcerated in foreign prisons unclear. However, in a recent interview, Minister Sisulu raised concern over the number of South Africans in foreign prisons, especially after Tyron Lee Coetzee was sentenced to death in Vietnam on a conviction of drug muling. The Minister indicated that over 800 people are incarcerated in foreign jails, the majority of them (300) in South American prisons (Shange, 2018:np). Statistics South Africa estimates the current population of South Africa to be 57,73 million people. When one considers that 800 is a minute sample of the overall population, one can perhaps infer that the current paucity of research in this area may be due to the perceived low statistical importance of the phenomenon. Nevertheless, Ledwaba (2016:np) citing the DIRCO spokesperson Kgwete, indicates that the general number known to the Department remains comparatively stable, indicating no notable increase in arrests globally. As a result, predictions for the number of South Africans incarcerated in foreign prisons for drug-related crimes remain unclear and are based primarily on reports obtained from the popular media which may not always be statistically reliable.

Mhlana (2016:np) declares that there are 169 South Africans incarcerated for drug smuggling in Brazil, and 30 in Peru. A media statement issued by the Minister of Social Development, Ms Bathabile Dlamini, claims that there are 337 South African females imprisoned in foreign prisons for drug trafficking. The statement further avers that 92 women are being held in nine female prisons in Brazil, and 71 females are currently serving sentences in São Paulo (Dlamini, 2013:1). Bagala (2016:np), reported that in November 2016, two South African women were arrested in the Ugandan capital of Kampala for cocaine smuggling. Drugs were found concealed in their possessions. No current information on this case is however available on the DIRCO website, which confirms the unreliability of available statistics supposedly documenting the rate of occurrence. As previously indicated, there is a dire lack of readily available and reliable

data which hinders researcher ability to offer a clear picture of the present situation in South Africa.

Van Heerden and Minnaar (2015:3) posit that except for summaries included in reports such as the annual United Nations World Drug Reports, there is a lack of consolidated, detailed information on the explicit aspects of drug supply, drug demand, trafficking and smuggling, including the participation of organised crime in the South African drug market. Rall (2017:np), postulates that South Africa is considered the largest market for illicit drugs in sub-Saharan Africa, with the trafficking and use of drugs rising. The latter, notwithstanding, reliable South African statistics regarding drug trafficking are scarce and often unreliable.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNDOC) states that South Africa is a regional centre for the production and smuggling of methamphetamine, with the majority of production concentrated in the Gauteng Province. The drugs must be distributed globally and across borders and to do so entails an elaborate scheme of first concealing the drugs to ensure that they pass undetected. It is here that the research participants in this study are better able to explain their motives for participating as drug mules, as all the participants smuggled drugs using air transportation (and infrequently via land) across borders into other countries. Another question which arises regards the fallibility of airport security and the skill of drug mules to avoid detection. Oliver (2015:5) posits that drug smuggling is a profitable business, which underscores a central theme of drug mule research; mainly that most of the role-players in the trade have a financial motivation for their involvement. While there appear to be multiple reasons why women choose to partake in crime, some choices may be complex and only fully understood through the specific context of participants in this study.

As inferred in the introduction, drug muling is risky, and the consequences of detection and apprehension can lead to fatal results. Gallahue and Lines (2015:5-6) claim that there are at least 33 countries and territories that prescribe the death penalty for individuals caught smuggling drugs into the country. These countries are classified as high application, low application, and symbolic application states. In practice, high application states are countries that routinely conduct executions on individuals

convicted of drug offences and execution forms part of their criminal justice system. Low application countries are those where executions are an exceptional occurrence and not regularly enforced. Symbolic application states entrench the death penalty in their legislation but do not conduct or enforce execution orders (Gallahue & Lines, 2015:10).

Countries, such as China, Iran, Indonesia, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, and Vietnam, are considered high application states. Egypt, Kuwait, Taiwan, Thailand, and Pakistan are low application countries. Lastly, Oman, Qatar, India, Bangladesh, United Arab Emirates, Sri Lanka, Bahrain, the USA, Palestinian Authority, South Sudan, South Korea, Myanmar, Lao PDR, Brunei-Darussalam and Cuba register as symbolic application states (Gallahue & Lines, 2015:05). Ledwaba (2016:np) states that four South African citizens are on death row in Malaysia, which is a high application country, showing that those arrested and convicted are more than likely to face execution. From the above data, it appears that severe punishment and harsh prison sentences handed down to individuals convicted of drug smuggling in countries such as China, Thailand and Malaysia; as well as the associated consequences of being caught, do not seem to serve as a deterrent. According to Fleetwood (2015b:964), in general, individuals rarely carry drugs unknowingly. Hence, it can be assumed that they are aware of the risks and willingly drug mule despite the harsh punishment they could face if caught. The lacuna of action/reaction highlights the need for further research to determine what motivates people to become drug mules, and in the context of this research, specifically what motivates women to carry out drug muling activities.

Bailey (2013:117) asserts that female motives to drug mule, are ignored; or only investigated against traditional contextual views of the nature and role of women in society. Fleetwood (2009:20) supports the assertion that men are usually shown as the brains behind trafficking, whereas women are portrayed as submissive, passive carriers juxtaposed against the supposedly masculine characteristics of the drug trade such as action, risk, violence and danger. Fleetwood (2009:109) acknowledges this assumption by emphasising that the female path into the drug trade is generally ignored and that the role of women remains submissive, victimised and generally understood as 'tricked, trapped or compelled'.



Fleetwood (2009:20) asserts that women involved in this specific crime go against traditional views of femininity and states, "*Political and academic discourses emphasised women's victimhood and served to 'render them harmless', ergo translating the role of mules from deviant to 'inoffensive'.*" Similarly, female drug mules are portrayed as targets; hoodwinked into transporting drugs by drug syndicates, offering them 'employment' (Tsotetsi, 2012:1). Women who become drug mules are thus mainly portrayed as desperate individuals who are unemployed, in financial trouble or with minimal prior exposure to travel (Geldenhuys, 2016:26). Scholars such as Tsotetsi (2012:2) assert that when investigating drug muling, poverty is overwhelmingly considered the prime blame factor for why individuals choose to become involved in the shadowy world of drug trafficking. Weber (2019:1769) concurs, stating that poverty and a lack of economic opportunities are significant motivators when it comes to the recruitment of drug mules. In addition, individuals from middle-class families are increasingly involved in drug trafficking. While the above assertions linking muling to poverty may have some statistical basis, there are other factors at play over and above poverty which the researcher proves later in this study.

Hübschle (2014:43) reports that mules have little or no knowledge of the key players within drug networks because they are more often than not recruited by local men and women. An example is the case of Angela Sanclemente, a former Colombian model known as the 'cocaine queen'; and the doyen of an international drug smuggling operation, who used female models to drug mule (Fleetwood, 2015b:966).

It is against the above background that this study aims to explore the motives of women who become drug mules. Numerous factors, such as socio-economic background, economic causes, family history and the psycho-social conditions, will be explored. The researcher will examine how mules are recruited, who recruits them, why they are specifically targeted, and the modus operandi used to recruit and deploy.

Van Heerden (2014:89) opines - based on media articles analysed for her particular study - that the majority of perpetrators arrested for carrying drugs are female. Fleetwood (2009:21) however, indicates that statistics may not necessarily support this assertion; because they indicate that male drug mules are arrested more often

than women for drug trafficking. According to Hübschle (2014:43) however, the modus operandi of drug traffickers has changed in order to avoid detection by law enforcement agencies, and organised crime syndicates have started using women of various ages and races more frequently than men to smuggle drugs across borders. The latter is - as previously mentioned - due to stereotypical views of women as victims rather than offenders. When coupled with a lack of recent statistical data, the view of female drug mules as victims of circumstance must be investigated to evince or disprove conjectures relating to gender roles and drug muling.

Globally, drug mules are an under-researched population and more so female drug mules. Stengel and Fleetwood (2014:2) claim that women represent up to 30% of individuals arrested for drug trafficking globally, mainly for being drug mules. At this time, South African research on drug mules is limited, particularly when it relates to female drug mules and their involvement in drug trafficking. Dastile (2013:5297-5298) furthermore argues that there is a scarcity of female narratives regarding female offending in South Africa, and those female offenders are generally not provided with an opportunity to explain their circumstances but are instead classed as coming from impoverished backgrounds, being single, divorced or having limited educational backgrounds – thus entrenching the ‘female as victim’ narrative. She further opines that current literature on female perpetrators offers general overviews which do not expound the genealogy of female offenders since the offenders do not tell their stories themselves (Dastile, 2013:5298). Against this background, this research aims to allow female drug mules to tell their own stories, and more specifically, what motivated them to become drug mules.

### **1.3 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

The research aim describes what a study plans to do, attain, or achieve (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delpont, 2011:94). While the aim of a study indicates the central drive, the objectives identify the specific issues that the research proposes to examine; in other words, the steps that must be taken to achieve the aim of the study (De Vos et al., 2011:94).

This research aims to explore what motivates female offenders to become drug mules. As such, the research will employ case studies to achieve the following objectives, to improve existing levels of information and research on female drug mules in South Africa:

- Describing participant experiences and perceptions when acting as drug mules,
- exploring what motivated the participants to become drug mules by focusing on the following:
  - socio-economic factors;
  - relational motivators;
  - social functioning; and
- exploring causal risk factors that indirectly motivated drug muling.

The lack of information about what motivates women to become drug mules underpins this study and thus directed the research questions, which emanated from the aim and objectives of the study. The purpose of the research questions was, therefore, to focus the study (De Vos et al., 2011:79). The primary research question was what motivates women to become drug mules. To answer this broad question, further, sub-questions were formulated, to wit:

- i. How did the participants view their experience as drug mules?
- ii. Did socio-economic factors influence participants to become drug mules?
- iii. What role did romantic partners, family members and/or friends play in participants becoming drug mules?
- iv. Did the participants' lifestyles play a role in them becoming drug mules?
- v. What other factors contributed to the participants becoming drug mules?

#### **1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The following contribute to the value of the study:

#### **1.4.1 The prevention and management of crimes committed by drug mules**

The lack of statistics and research on female motivations towards drug muling is evident in this study. At most, the current body of research is incidental and hypothetical, resulting in divergent opinions of what motivates women to become drug mules. Summers and Rossmo (2019:31) highlight the role that crime-related information can play in the development and implementation of strategic action plans to reduce crime. It is the researcher's opinion that this lack of research has a direct impact on the effective prevention and management of crimes committed by drug mules. It is therefore averred that findings from this study could be used by the South African Police Services (SAPS) to develop proactive strategies to manage and prevent crimes committed by drug mules. In addition, rehabilitative interventions could be developed by the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) to address the identified causal risk factors which motivate women to become drug mules.

Further, the research has value to society. Findings from this study highlight the multi-dimensional nature of factors that motivate women to become drug mules. Cognisance of these causal factors could aid with the early detection of risk factors which could be addressed pro-actively.

#### **1.4.2 Advancement of feminist criminology, and expansion of the knowledge base of female criminality**

A general lack of research focusing on female offenders is evident in South Africa. Resultantly, the literature on female perpetrators offers general overviews which do not expound the genealogy of female offender research (Dastile, 2013:5298). Criminology is also viewed as one of the most masculinised social-science fields because of the generally accepted view that men are more likely to engage in criminal activities than women (Britton, 2000:58). According to Dastile (2013:5297), this is predominately because females are not granted a platform to tell their stories. Feminist criminology aims to position gender at the centre and not the periphery of criminology, hence presenting research about female offending, victimisation, and institutional responses to these problems (Renzetti, 2016:43). Against this background this study aims to advance feminist criminology by firstly focusing on female drug mules, and

secondly, using a case study design through which female drug mules are given a platform to voice their experiences personally.

## **1.5 CHAPTER CONCLUSION**

This chapter introduced the research topic, aims and objectives, which included the motivation for the research. With the rise of arrest statistics relating to drug mules worldwide, and in South Africa in particular, this research aims to improve the current understanding of what motivates females to become drug mules, and what factors play a role in their choices. Chapter two commences with a global overview of drug trafficking and smuggling in order to set the contextual scene for the remainder of this research.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **DRUG TRAFFICKING AND SMUGGLING – AN OVERVIEW**

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#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

Admittedly, along with the evolving and progress-driven nature of the global world, advancements have been made in the war against drugs. Nevertheless, research shows that global drug trafficking is still the highest income-earning illicit trade worldwide (May, 2017:3). Despite improvements to security infrastructure and crime prevention communication networks at ports worldwide, drug trade organisations (DTOs) still find ways and means to distribute drugs in staggering quantities if one is cognizant of the number of seizures reported by the popular media. The goal of this chapter is to provide an overview of the global drug trade and shed light on the growth and revolving innovation of drug trafficking networks distributing drugs nationally and across borders.

#### **2.2 GLOBAL OVERVIEW OF THE DRUG TRADE**

In the 1900s, opium, cocaine, marijuana, and alcohol were legal in the USA before several laws passed, making them illegal to manufacture, sell or use (Redmond, 2013:2). Drug trafficking was first acknowledged as an international concern during the Opium Wars of the mid-nineteenth century and ultimately led to the Shanghai Opium Conference of 1909 (Kiefer, 2009:158). The international drug trade as we know it today, however, developed in the early 1970s after the Single Convention 1961 (Fleetwood, 2014:19). According to Kiefer (2009:160) the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, outlined rules concerning the agricultural production, manufacture, trade, and use of the then four different schedules of drugs. The League of Nations was then charged to address the narcotics issue, and to specifically oversee the implementation of agreements concerning the trafficking of opium and other dangerous drugs (Kiefer, 2009:159).

Internationally, global drug market trends are published by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). This report includes an assessment of the status of world supply and demand for illicit drugs.

Information in the UNODC report is gathered from and provided by governments and the research section of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP), as well as other expert agencies and international institutions. The Report attempts to identify trends in the evolution of global illicit drug markets (UNDOC, 2018:1). The World Drug Report, UNDOC (2017:18-19) maintains that drug trafficking became dominant in the 1980s due to trade expanding progressively cross-border and increasing in complexity, thus encouraging national governments to commit to international legal obligations to fight against illicit substances and drugs. In 1988, the United Nations Convention against Illicit Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances was established. Jelsma (2015:7) describes it as a treaty that mandated signatory countries to impose criminal sanctions against all aspects of illicit drug production, including possession and trafficking.

Furthermore, according to UNDOC (2017:21), the 1988 Convention specified that serious offences such as production, manufacture, transport, sale, importation, and exportation of drugs would be subject to extradition, thus bringing an end to years of immunity for drug traffickers in certain non-extradition countries. The Convention estopped crime bosses from continuing their operations from prison. Notwithstanding all the attempts to curb drug-related crime, a century later, an analysis of transnational crime in the developing world found that drug trafficking had emerged as a pervasive transnational problem of serious concern (May, 2017:3).

The Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) lists the top five global routes for drug trafficking as the Southern route which operates between Afghanistan, Pakistan and South East Asia; the Andean route which covers the USA; the Balkan route which runs between Afghanistan, Iran, Turkey, Southeast Europe and Western Europe; the Northern route which operates from Afghanistan to Central Asia, Russia and Western Europe; and lastly the Andean route to Europe (OCCRP, 2013). The global overview of drug demand and supply shows a worldwide increase in opium production and expansion of the cocaine market in particular (UNDOC,

2017:10). Additionally, it is evident from the above discussion that economics play a significant role in drug trafficking, and as long as there is a demand, there will always be a supply. Van Heerden and Minnaar (2015:2) concur that the drug trade is, “...a straightforward fact of ‘supply-and-demand’ economics and needs fulfilment.”

In the global economy, drugs have become an international concern because of the resilience of the drug market, and the ‘balloon effect’ theory or ‘the push-down, pop-up effect.’ Redmond (2013:5) describes the “*push-down, pop-up effect*” as a central dynamic in capitalism, resulting in a perpetual cycle of the eradication of drug cultivation and manufacturing in one country, and its subsequent reemergence in another. Similarly, the “*balloon effect*” implies that because the drug market is not price-sensitive, drugs will be consumed irrespective of cost; ergo if a drug route or production plant is destroyed, supply to end-users is not reduced. Tharoor (2017:1) describes it as “...*squeezing a balloon in one place makes it expand in another.*” This balloon effect also affects smuggling methods, in that if a method of transporting drugs through mules is discovered and subsequently targeted by border patrol agents, the method of smuggling will change. Fleetwood (2011:384-385) avers that various methods of concealment are used by mules, including drugs packed in luggage and packages; strapped to bodies; packed in clothes or by swallowing capsules for internal concealment. In respect of the balloon effect, if mules carrying drugs in the false bottom of a suitcase are regularly stopped and searched, then the drugs will be smuggled in another way, such as body packing, swallowing or hiding the drugs in false body parts strapped to the body of the mule. Malek (2017:1) reports that some mules are now even swallowing liquid cocaine in condoms which assume the shape of the intestine, instead of cocaine packed into pellets, making the contraband challenging to spot on X-rays should the mule be stopped and searched. O’Keeffe (2015:1) avers that cocaine – including liquid cocaine - is the predominant drug smuggled via air transport, but that cannabis and heroin are also popular substances for such transport.

Another example of how the balloon effect comes into play is when officials identify ‘hot spot’ countries, and mules then use new routes, so they are not subject to suspicion based on the route. A considerable quantity of drugs is transported between



Brazil and African countries via Angola, for example. According to Brune (2011:1) in 2009, African mules were responsible for transporting more than 90% of the drugs that reached Angola via air transport. Brazil is considered a 'hot spot' country, meaning a person that fits the stereotypical drug mule profile as established by authorities, and who is travelling to and from Brazil, will automatically be stopped and searched. Precisely because of such interventions, drug smuggling cartels were forced to source alternative routes, thus creating the pop-up and push-down effect. As a result, drug mules now travel from a South American country via another transit country before landing in South Africa, to avoid suspicion or detection. Essentially, even if the South American - South Africa route is strictly monitored and guarded, an alternative route will be used to transport drugs.

Bargent (2016:1) reports another innovative method concomitant to the balloon effect, via the deployment of numerous drug mules booked onto the same flight. This practice assumes that if some of the mules are stopped at least some will pass customs unhindered if they are all on the same flight. The latter is called the 'shot-gunning technique.' Singh and Van Zyl (2007:131) assert that this *modus operandi* is used by many Nigerian drug cartels to guarantee that at least some of their supply will get through customs. To further illustrate this point, a total of six women were apprehended in one day at Guarulhos in Brazil for attempting to smuggle 30 kg of cocaine to South Africa (Maughan, 2006:1). Another *modus operandi* is having people strategically placed on flights to serve as a distraction by acting suspiciously while carrying packets of harmless white powder in order to draw the attention of customs officials away from the actual mule(s) (Bargent, 2016:1). This shot-gunning technique is used by drug traffickers as a way of managing and spreading the risk of detection (Carrier & Klantschnig, 2012:96) and has become popular and widely used. Bargent (2016:1) concurs that Colombian syndicates in particular place many mules on the same flights, or different flights going to the same destination on the same day, which ensures that a larger quantity of drugs will get to the intended clients while minimising the risk, in comparison to sending one large shipment.

## **2.3 NATURE AND EXTENT OF DRUG TRAFFICKING**

To appreciate the scale of global drug trafficking, it is necessary to understand the volume of drugs manufactured and their economic earning potential. The European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), claims that no distinction is made between the different role-players and drug trafficking components such as production or transportation; or between import and export (EMCDDA, 2012:7). Both Heal (2015:80), and Holligan (2019:04) have inferred that being a drug mule is a job in so far as people making an informed choice to be part of the labour market, albeit in this instance, both an illegal market and an illegal occupation. The drug industry is substantial with massive profits, so it is assumed that people who choose to partake do so knowingly because they want to share in the benefits. Although drug mules are generally underpaid in comparison to drug traffickers and producers, they still stand to make more money in one trip than an average person would make from a month working a legitimate job like, for example, a cashier at a grocery store.

According to the Global Financial Integrity Report, the 2014 global drug trafficking industry was estimated to be worth between \$462 and \$652 billion. This figure makes it the world's second-largest illicit market (the first being pirated and counterfeit goods which generate as much as \$1.3 trillion per annum) (May, 2017, 13, Tharoor; 2017:1). Cocaine alone is valued at between \$94 and \$143 billion, while opiates are valued between \$75 to \$132 billion displaying similarities in the number of global consumers (May, 2017:20). It is disconcerting to note that a search of the literature did not produce more recent statistics which adds to the researcher's concern expressed in chapter one as to the paucity of current research on the use of mules in the drug trade industry.

Yong-an (2016:9) claims that the drug organisations responsible for trafficking heroin into the USA are based predominantly in Afghanistan, Pakistan, West Africa, and India. The 2017 European Drug Report issued by the EMCDDA estimates that Europeans spend between €24 and €31 billion on illicit drugs per annum (EMCDDA, 2017:19). As it stands, Rischard (2007:1) highlights that the use of drugs is on the rise in Russia, Eastern Europe, Asia, and now even Africa where the use of crack cocaine (in South Africa in particular) has spread rapidly since 1995.

Chossudovsky (2017:1) maintains that Afghanistan is the global leader in heroin production, producing well over 70% of the global supply which is projected by the UN to be valued between \$400- \$500 billion. The EMCDDA (2017:24) claims that the heroin market is the second-largest illicit drug market in the EU, estimated to be valued at €6.8 billion annually. Chossudovsky (2017:1) asserts that Afghani heroin production increased by 43% - totalling 43 metric tons - in 2016 compared to 2015. This assertion is supported by Yong-an (2016:8) who claims that in the 16 years since the USA invaded Afghanistan, the country's opium production has doubled, now accounting for 90% of world supply. The market for synthetic stimulants, amphetamines, methamphetamines, and ecstasy, is estimated to be lower than that of opioids but still ranges in net-value between €1.2 to €2.5 billion, (EMCDDA, 2017:12).

Woody (2016:1) found that the increase in heroin abuse in the USA has created a considerable outpouring of opium and heroin production by criminal groups in Mexico. Guerrero, a city in Mexico, produces 60% of Mexico's poppy crop, which is used almost entirely for export to the US market (Woody, 2016:1). According to Platt (2015:66) cocaine, in turn, is produced predominantly in South America, with the majority of the coca leaf (an essential ingredient in cocaine) grown in Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia for processing in Colombia. The Global Cocaine Trafficking Report (2016:3) commissioned by the White House, identified the USA as the largest consumer of cocaine, and responsible for approximately 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of global usage during the past five years. Beittel (2017:6) concurs, identifying Mexican drug trafficking organisations as the leading suppliers of illicit drugs in the USA, and further claims that drug organisations are rapidly gaining control of the Latin American countries. According to the Global Cocaine Trafficking Report (2016:5) production is on the rise in Colombia, showing a 60% increase in 2015, for example.

There has also been a significant increase in cocaine use in Europe over the past decade, establishing it as a hub in the global market for illicit drugs (Fritzvold, 2015:1). Colombia, Brazil, and Venezuela are reported to be the 'key departure points' for trafficking cocaine into Europe; with Bolivia and Peru intensifying their roles as suppliers. The Global Cocaine Trafficking Report (2016:5) highlights that Peruvian

cocaine production has continued to grow - reaching its highest level since the 1990s, while Bolivian production reached its highest recorded level in 2015. Latin America is a crucial geographic zone for drug production and trafficking, and as such Grisa and Ledebur (2016:3) assert that the Andean countries of Colombia, Peru and Bolivia are the world's primary producers of coca leaf. Meanwhile, Central America, Mexico and the Caribbean have become the principal corridors for transporting drugs into the USA and Europe. Grisa and Ledebur (2016:6) aver that cocaine production in the Andes has remained stable. The drug trade in Colombia began with marijuana in the 1960s and then progressed into the cocaine trade in the 1970s, but significant coca plantings appeared only in the 1990s. Brozinsky (2016:1) claims that roughly 866 tons of cocaine were manufactured at secret laboratories across Colombia in 2016.

Behera (2013:234) cites geography and history as factors that make central Asian states appealing areas for drug trafficking, mainly because many of the Asian states are situated between the world's largest illicit opium producers, and profitable markets in Western Europe. Yong-an (2016:3) identifies the Golden Triangle, with particular emphasis on Myanmar, as the primary source of foreign-made drugs in China. Seizure records from the World Customs Organization reveal that 70% of the heroin seized in China originated from Myanmar. This assertion is supported by Li and Lui (2017:63) who highlight that China has emerged as a primary illicit drug trafficking market on the global stage.

As noted by Ralston (2016:1) the New South Wales Crime Commission states that illicit drug trade is the primary source of income for organised crime in Australia, thus implying that expatriate Australians are significant role-players in the importation of drugs into Australia. Notably, Verghis (2017:1) concludes that Australia is currently going through a crisis and reports indicate the highest use of methamphetamine in the English-speaking world. UNDOC (2017:16) postulates that 2015 saw the highest ever reported global seizure of methamphetamine with an increase of 30% - translating to approximately 864 tons - while in America seizures increased by 40% (141 tons); and 35% in Europe (equivalent to 84 tons). Between April 2014 and September 2015, 26.5 metric tons of methamphetamine, and 10.2 metric tons of cocaine were seized in Mexico, in addition to the 272 clandestine drug laboratories detected in the same

period (Beittel 2017:9). UNDOC (2017:18) reports that 40% of global heroin and morphine seizures in 2015 occurred in an around the Balkan route as described earlier.

Carrier and Klantschnig (2012:90) maintain that seizures recorded along African drug smuggling routes, account for less than 1% of overall seizures internationally, making Africa a relatively minor contributor to the supply and spread of drugs. Consequently, the quantities of drugs confiscated worldwide are on the increase; however, Coyne (2015:1) concedes that an escalated number of drug seizures does not automatically suggest a decrease in available drugs. In many instances, Conti (2016:1) states that the quantities of drugs seized constitute a setback to the consignment owner rather than having a lasting beneficial effect on the fight against drugs.

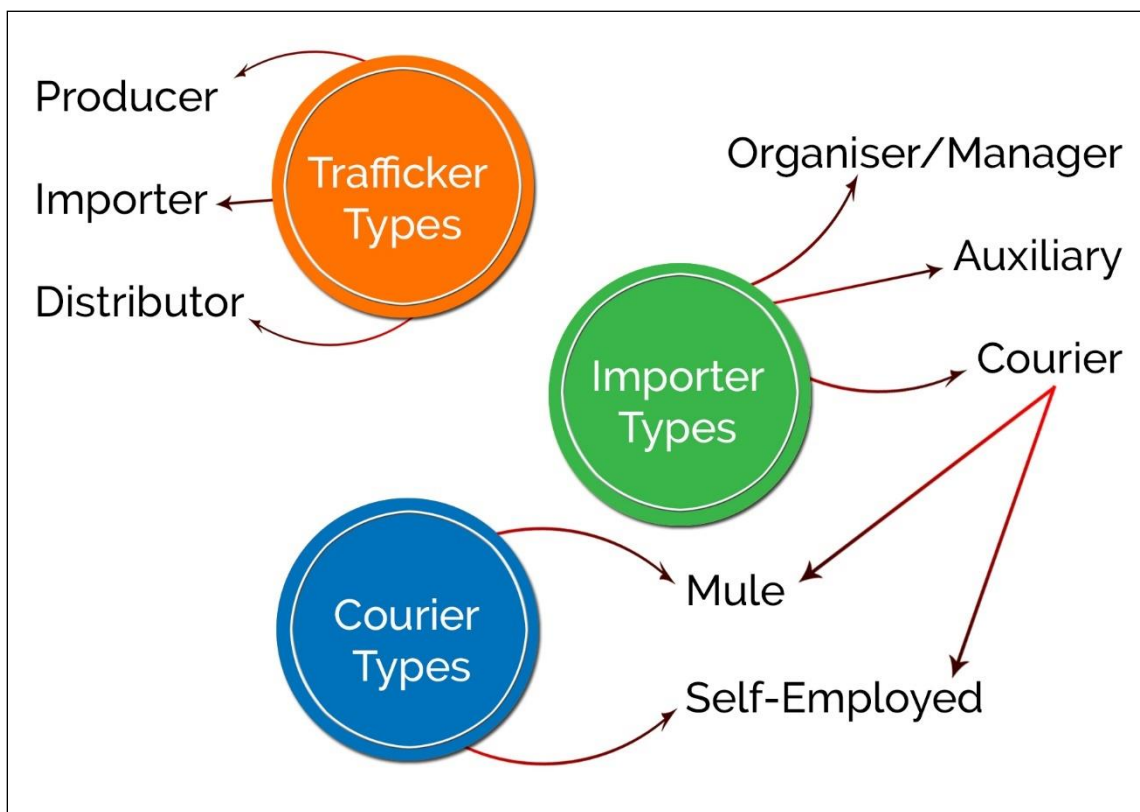
In South Africa, there is a dearth of information and statistics regarding drug trafficking, drug mules and the drug trade in general (as was previously mentioned). However, Carrier and Klantschnig (2012:91) point out that South Africa, having the most industrialised economy in Africa, joined the African transportation trade and became the continent's major consumer country of heroin and cocaine in the 1990s.

The EMCDDA (2013:13) outlines that there appear to be some structured roles within drug trafficking organisations which operate on different levels, such as producers, mules, brokers and money launderers. Despite this, Van Heerden (2014:4) posits that reports are limited as information concerning drug trends in South Africa only reflect treatment centre statistics published by the South African Community Epidemiology Network on Drug Use (SACENDU), and the South African National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (SANCA).

The global drug overview provided above illustrates the sheer scale of the drug industry and substantial amounts of money involved. As such, all drug trafficking elements will continue to coexist, including the use of drug mules to transport drugs, due to the high demand for drugs globally.

O’Keeffe (2015:1) adds that even though the magnitude of the drug trade has vacillated over the years, transportation via air is still the preferred method of smuggling, and the use of human couriers or drug mules remains the most popular method of drug trafficking. Notwithstanding this, drug mules are still considered at the very bottom of the income ladder in terms of earning hierarchy when it comes to drug trafficking (EMCDDA, 2012:14). As such, drug mules are considered “...*the bottom of the drug food chain*” (Singer, Tootle & Messerschmidt, 2013:121). Weber (2019:1753) highlights that because low-level drug mules lack familial ties and have little involvement with the larger drug trafficking groups, they are recruited solely for transportation which, in the end, exposes them to harsh sentences if they are apprehended. Further, this places drug mules at the most risk of exposure to authorities.

It is accepted that a majority of drug mules are at the bottom of the drug food chain as mentioned above; however, Weber (2019: 1764) mentions that it would be misguided to assume that all drug couriers are alike, that is, unknowing agents in drug organisations. The EMCDDA (2012:18) depicts the position of drug mules within the proposed typology of drug importers as below in figure 1.



**FIGURE 1: PROPOSED TYPOLOGY OF DRUG IMPORTERS**

Source: EMCDDA, 2012:18

A proposed typology of drug importers is depicted in the figure above. The difference between the courier types speaks to operational and motivational differences. Concerning figure one, a distinction is made between courier types, which in this instance include all smugglers who physically have the drugs in their possession in order to transport them from one location to another (EMCDDA, 2012:18). Weber (2019:1765) claims that some couriers run sophisticated drug smuggling operations, going as far as flying private aircraft into the USA for example. In terms of structure, the above figure is significant in that it shows that mules fall under a particular structure or chain of control; firstly the top three groups which consist of drug producers, distributors, and importers, followed by different types of importers, namely, managers, auxiliary agents and couriers. The last group in this hierarchy is the couriers which are demarcated in terms of self-employed couriers and drug mules. The mules are viewed as disposable resources and typically only know the name of the person who gave

them the drugs, and the name of the person to whom they must deliver the drugs (Weber, 2019:1765).

Simply put, the producers cultivate and manufacture the drugs, the importers transport the drugs to their intended destinations while the distributors receive the product to sell to the local market. Mules are classified under the importer umbrella, albeit on a minuscule scale. This arrangement shows that mules are recruited to be part of an organised operation to import and export drugs from various locations and points of distribution. Weber (2019:1767) states that because of their low status, drug mules are intentionally kept in the dark about the inner workings of the DTOs. As such, they have a distinctive albeit disposable role in the organised crime group. In the same breath, the distinction between a self-employed courier and a mule shows that the couriership of drugs is a potential business for self-employed couriers. This distinction is of importance because it demonstrates that in some instances, mules have agency/autonomy when it comes to their involvement in drug trafficking.

Van Heerden (2014:31) summarises the principle of supply and demand in the drug market by outlining that when a commodity - in this instance drugs - is in demand it will be supplied based on the relationship between the basic economic principles of lawful products, markets and the global illicit drug markets. In essence, based on the above, drugs are widely available and in high demand, and therefore, drug mules will continue to play a prominent role in the drug industry. The primary purpose of this research is to explore drug mule motivations (in this case, specifically women) and identify the factors that lead to acceptance of the drug mule role. Carrier and Klantschnig (2012:80) argue that drug smuggling in Africa is similar to other countries worldwide, in that it is project-based, driven by profit and includes various stakeholders. As demonstrated above, the drug market is highly profitable, which dictates its continued existence. Ergo, the financial motivation element amongst other aspects will be explored as part of the motivation of female drug mules later in this study.



## **2.4 FACTORS ENABLING DRUG TRAFFICKING**

Three factors that play a significant role in enabling drug trafficking are globalisation, corruption, and the availability of human resources.

### **2.4.1 Globalisation**

A pertinent issue influencing the growth of the drug trafficking industry is globalisation. In this regard, Shaw (2017:5-6) notes Africa's growing role in illicit markets as a result of globalisation. He states, for example, that the Sub-Saharan economy increased by more than 6% between 2003–2008 and the same growth is evident in the illegal economy. According to Fleetwood (2014:24), the 1990s saw a change in the dialogue about drug trafficking as far as drug trafficking is seen as a business. This debate, therefore, marked the '90s as a critical period of change in the drug economy in Africa (Shaw, 2017:8). Drug traffickers have also been influenced by globalisation with the cross-national trafficking of drugs becoming an essential part of the illicit drug trade (Jenner, 2011:906).

Marsh, Wilson and Kenenhan (2012:3) argue that globalisation has improved the efficiency of markets for illicit goods in the same way they have improved markets for legal goods. Resultantly, globalisation has had a significant influence on the growth of the drug trade similar to lawful business, due to the use of technology, commercial networks, and financial structures that are part of globalisation processes (Gachúz, 2016:3). This view is supported by Hanna (2016:38) who posits that with globalisation, criminals can conceal their contraband within legitimate businesses. Large corporate companies have been known to be involved in the drug trade, albeit indirectly. According to Behera (2013:231), drug trafficking cartels usually syphon their money through banks and financial institutions that offer secrecy and desirable investment earnings. As such, most of the funds generated by the illicit drug trade are laundered by well-known financial institutions (Fleetwood, 2011:4). An example is the American division of HSBC bank which admitted to laundering \$22 billion of Mexican Sinaloa cartel drug money through their affiliate HBUS in 2012. Although HSBC was ultimately found guilty, they only received minimal sanctions - a fine of \$1.9 billion which represented 1/12<sup>th</sup> of the profit they made from the transaction (Taylor–Wickenden, 2015:1).

In 2014, it was predicted that transnational organised crime cartels worldwide had generated between 1/5<sup>th</sup> and 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of their revenues from drug sales (UNDOC, 2017:21). Hence, the drug trade is perceived as a lucrative enterprise and subsequently, a 'business' (Fleetwood, 2014:24). According to Hamilton (2016:3), as a collective, the logistical infrastructure required for the distribution of drugs exceeds the systems used by Amazon, FedEx, and UPS combined. The systems and coordination involved in the distribution of illicit drugs include the use of planes, submarines, speedboats, trucks, and cross-border tunnels. Gomis (2016:4) alludes to other inventive smuggling means, such as smaller surface vessels instead of large ships off the coast of West Africa; the use of submarines instead of overland transport in Latin America; drug catapults, drones and tunnels over and under the US–Mexican border; and the use of cyber tools, such as hackers. Modern technology, global positioning systems, and cellular phones are used to assist with operations and staff members qualified with MBAs are often found employed to run the traffickers' finance and money-laundering operations (Haughton, 2011:109).

#### **2.4.2 Corruption**

The discourse regarding corruption in South Africa is usually politically driven, and Hübschle (2014:33) surmises that corruption is a fundamental approach used by crime organisations to destabilise the government, law enforcement and the economy. Carrier and Klantschnig (2012:53) note that when governments are destabilised, state institutions also become subverted and consequently undermined. Shaw (2017:11) states that drug money has a significant impact on politics in East and West Africa. According to Van Heerden (2014:36), the International Narcotics Control Strategy Report of 2013 (INCSR, 2013) outlined that the South African government vigorously tackled drug-related corruption resulting in the formation of the Independent Complaints Directorate (ICD) in 1997 which focused primarily on eliminating police corruption. When it comes to drug trafficking, the relationship between corrupt private citizens and public officials is intrinsic to drug trafficking organisations and their operations. Corruption of police, airport security, customs officials and some politicians ensure that the majority of consignments pass undetected across borders (Hübschle, 2014:42). Carrier and Klantschnig (2012:53) maintain that poor salaries offered to law enforcement officials make them susceptible to bribery and corruption.

### **2.4.3 Availability of human resources**

Despite advanced technological developments, Bargent (2016:1) maintains that the conventional methods, such as using drug mules, remain a significant part of the business for drug trafficking organisations. The rationale for the use of drug mules is based on a reasonable and rational assessment about risk and profit and is hence a hard business decision (Fleetwood, 2014:16).

Wolf (2013:1) reports that one of the most critical changes in the world economy due to globalisation has been the addition of 1/5<sup>th</sup> of humankind into the global labour market - many of which are willing to work for a pittance. This increase in the unskilled labour market has contributed to the creation of a sector of the labour force willing to work as drug mules to earn an income. According to Fleetwood (2011:384), a drug mule she interviewed described mule work as 'a normal job' with the only difference that there is no negotiation about the employment conditions; it is a 'take it or leave it' type of job, where a drug mule merely does what they are told to in exchange for remuneration. Hübschle (2014:43) emphasises that the payment for drug muling is minimal if compared to the overall profits made from a successful drug smuggling operation. In addition, drug mules are in no small extent viewed as an expendable workforce; hence some drug mules are set up to be caught in order to allow others who carry larger drug packages to escape. Fleetwood (2011:380) posits that drug mules are not usually aware of what they are carrying, to the extent that mules are seldom involved with the selection of the drug or the quantity carried; adding that they are purposefully misled in order to boost their confidence at the chance of success while underplaying potential harmful consequences (Fleetwood, 2011:384-386). In contrast to the above assertions, Carrier and Klantschnig (2012:96) found that the majority of drug mules were fully aware of the risks they are taking, and what they were carrying but considered the risk worth the potential reward.

Unlu and Ekici (2012:298) report a 66% increase in female drug mules apprehended between 2006 and 2010. Being a drug mule carries a high risk, including harsh sentences when caught; often including the death penalty and/or death due to rupturing and intoxication in cases where drugs were swallowed (appositely referred

to 'walking around with a belly full of death'). In addition, drug mules are often found murdered because they are viewed as expendable, and as posing a high risk of revealing their source to the authorities (Fleetwood, 2015:964; Schemenauer, 2012:89; Unlu & Ekici, 2012: 300).

Schemenauer (2012:97) posits that being a female drug mule is furthermore risky due to women being discriminated against by border control surveillance because they may be perceived as being poor or foreign according to the profile of a typical drug mule. This situation correlates with findings by Harris (2011a:35), who lists Jamaica, South Africa, Mexico, Nigeria and Ghana (countries considered to be the third world) as the most common nationalities of drug mules in prisons in the United Kingdom. These perceptions are only substantiated by the nationalities of the typical drug mule arrested – for example, 30 Nigerians and 19 South Africans mules arrested in Turkey between 2006 and 2010 (Ulun & Ekici, 2012:304).

The researcher believes that logic would dictate that a person who chooses to become a drug mule would consider the mentioned risk factors when deciding to function as a drug mule. Nevertheless, the life stories of the women interviewed in this study do not attest to this fact. The dearth of information regarding what motivates women to become drug mules is, therefore, a matter of concern and a primary motivation for conducting this study.

## **2.5 GLOBAL WAR ON DRUGS**

The USA is known to get involved in various wars; however, what is not a well-known fact is that it has waged its longest-running war against drugs. The USA has been aggressively combatting drug trafficking and other drug crimes for more than 40 years, aptly called the 'War on Drugs' (Wilson, 2017:1). An example is the advent of the 'War on Terror' in Afghanistan in 2001, during which the USA also actively launched a war against drugs, eradicating poppy crops by spraying and burning (Behera, 2013:245). This action was a reaction to the growth of the opium trade after the 2001 war which saw opium fields spread from 7 600 hectares to over 224 000 hectares, resulting in the death of over one million people, costing a trillion dollars and the destructions of tens of millions of lives (Edstrom, 2015:1). Another example is the Colombian

government that put a plan in place in December 2016 to destroy 100 000 hectares of coca by the end of 2017; 50% to be compulsorily removed, and the other half removed through crop exchange arrangements with coca farmers (Brodzinsky, 2017:1). Redmond (2013:1) likens the war on drugs in Mexico to a 'killing machine' stating that the level of violence, killing and massacre can be compared to conventional warfare. In November 2017, 1 805 tons of seized drugs - worth approximately \$1 billion - were set alight during a burning ceremony in Islamabad, Pakistan, as part of the 'war against drugs' in that country. As it stands, however, Tharoor (2017:1) emphasises that the global value of the drug trade has increased to mammoth proportions and indeed exceeds the gross domestic product of many countries by far, despite such interventions.

It should also be noted that achieving a drug-free society has been the objective of the vast majority of countries globally; however, the prevalence of drug use has remained steady over 20 years according to the United Nations (Dreifuss, Grover & Cattai, 2016:1). It can, therefore, be concluded that the war against drugs is not a successful one.

Branson (2017:1) opines that responsible legal regulation would be a more successful approach to combat drug trafficking instead of the total drug prohibition currently used. In addition, legal regulation would improve public health goals because it focusses on rehabilitation instead of policing drug abuse. Obasanjo and Grover (2017:1) highlight that Portugal has seen a 50% decrease in arrests and incarceration for drug offences, including a fourfold decrease in opioid overdoses, and an 18% per capita decrease in social costs related to drugs, mainly due to her decriminalisation of drug use. The Global Commission on Drug Policy (2016:np) concurs that the decriminalisation of drugs is the best way to deal with the problem, based on dependable, unbiased, and scientific evidence. According to Shaw and Bird (2017:1). Ghana has decriminalised personal possession of illicit drugs because they realised that their punitive drug policy was not successful. Dreifuss and Bem (2016:1), posit that decriminalisation means the removal of all penalties for people using or possessing drugs for personal use, in order to find alternatives to imprisonment and criminal punishment for low-level players such as user-dealers, mules, and cultivators. Of course, the issue of decriminalisation is not

as clear cut as this. Fischer (2017:1) highlights an overlooked fact that decriminalising drugs does not stop drug abuse and the concurrent criminal market that meets the ongoing demand.

A report by the Inter-Parliamentary Union held in Vienna in 2016, rejected the suggestion of legalisation of illicit drugs calling it counterproductive, and arguing that countries should not turn to convenient policies just because unlawful activities are difficult to control (INCB, 2016:6). The Cato Handbook for Policymakers (2017:717) postulates that the present drug war strategy is a failure not because drug laws are ineffective, but because of weak infrastructure in drug-producing and transit countries and thus, the solution would be improved security and intelligence collaboration to apprehend transnational drug traffickers. Notwithstanding the money already spent fighting the drug war, the Cato Handbook for Policymakers (2017:715) further summarises that drug-trafficking groups have displayed great skill, flexibility, and entrepreneurship in order to service over a quarter billion drug-using clients globally.

Despite the myriad known consequences, an unintended consequence of the mentioned strategies against drug trafficking is that mainly young women are enticed into transporting drugs due to their own drug addictions, or romantic associations with drug dealers (Hübschle, 2014:44). Additionally, it was found that 72% of people sentenced for drug importation crimes are foreign nationals (Fleetwood, 2011:377-378).

Singh and Van Zyl (2007:127) claim that South Africans of all races and backgrounds have been deliberately recruited as active couriers for drug cartels. Mares (2011:np) believes that the crackdown on drug trafficking organisations has led to the increase of female involvement in drug trading. Given the above assertions, it is clear that women are actively involved in the drug trade as drug mules which, as previously mentioned, are not considered major players in drug trafficking, and are often thought of as expendable.

## 2.6 DRUG LAWS AND PENALIZATION

The United Nations Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs 1961 (as amended by the 1972 protocol); the UN Convention on Psychotropic Substances 1971 and the UN Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances 1988, are the international conventions that currently comment on the governance of illicit drugs (Global Commission on Drugs, 2016:12). These agreements ban the use, supply, production, cultivation, importation, and exportation of specific drugs except for medical or scientific purposes (Global Commission on Drugs, 2016:12). South Africa is part of all the UN Conventions against drug trading listed above. In their analysis of the supply, demand, trafficking and smuggling of drugs in South Africa, Van Heerden and Minnaar (2015:1) point out that South Africa has more law enforcement power than most African nations to fight domestic and international drug trafficking, drug production and drug abuse. However, according to Van Heerden (2014:64), there is no clear indication of what constitutes a drug-related crime in the South African context as a distinction is not made between different drug-related crimes. The INCSR (2017:252) details the establishment of the South African Narcotics Enforcement Bureau in 2016, which was integrated into the South African Police Service Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation. According to Monyakane (2016:241), the preferred approach to the adjudication of drug-related crimes in South Africa is rehabilitation rather than retribution as the former is seen to maintain the dignity of the court.

In a media statement by the Directorate of Priority Crimes Investigation - also known as the HAWKS - a claim was made that the South African Narcotics Enforcement Bureau will “...*add more venom to the Hawks' fight against narcotics*” (Directorate of Priority Crimes Investigation (HAWKS), 2016:np). Legal drugs are managed and controlled by the Medicines and Related Substance Control Act (101/1965) and the South African Drugs and Drug Trafficking Act (140/1992). Monyakane (2016:228) emphasises that in South Africa, sentences for trafficking in drugs fall under Schedule I and II of the Drugs and Drug Trafficking Act, read together with the South African Criminal Law Amendment Act 105 of 1997, which can result in imprisonment ranging from 5 to 25 years. In particular, Monayakane (2016:247) stipulates that the clauses found in sections 3, 4, 5, and 17 of the Drugs and Drug Trafficking Act for sentencing,

read together with section 51 of the Minimum Sentences Act, recommend mandatory sentences of imprisonment for all drug traffickers, depending on the seriousness of an offender's participation.

There are no set standards for sentencing. An example of a well-known case involving drug mules is that of Sheryl Cwele, the wife of the former Minister of State Security Siyabonga Cwele, who was found guilty of recruiting two drug mules. She was sentenced to twenty years' imprisonment along with her Nigerian counterpart (Hübschle, 2014:45). In *Keyser v State* (634/11) [2012] ZASCA 70, a man was arrested at ORTIA with 6,5 kg of cocaine from São Paulo and was subsequently sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment; however, the case was appealed and dismissed. The judge in the court *a quo*, however, cited the fact that the use of drugs was capable of destroying many lives, and thus, the punishment meted out was fitting. In contrast, a Peruvian woman was sentenced to 14 years in prison in 2017 for being found with 1.4 kg of cocaine in her possession while trying to board a flight at the King Shaka International Airport (Anon, 2017:8). The examples mentioned above illustrate a disparity in sentencing drug mules caught and convicted in South Africa.

Similar disparities are noted internationally. On a global scale, there were 682 executions carried out in 2012, with three-quarters of those recorded in Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia, mainly for drug-related offences (Nasrijal & Joni, 2015:202). In Malaysia, there are strict laws imposed on drug-related offences, the most severe being drug trafficking under section 39B of the Dangerous Drugs Act 1952 which carries the death penalty if a person is convicted (Nasrijal & Joni, 2015:199). On the other hand, Kiefer (2009:174) states that being convicted in the Netherlands for trafficking of hard drugs such as heroin, cocaine, and amphetamines, carries a maximum penalty of twelve years' imprisonment. Meanwhile, Chile, Spain, Colombia, and Argentina have all ruled that private drug use should not be subject to any penalisation from the state (Global Commission on Drugs, 2016:11). In Brazil, a country where many mules from South Africa are imprisoned, Lai (2012:9) concludes that there are various circumstances linked to drug mule offences, such as being a foreigner, not knowing the seriousness of carrying drugs and manipulation by a family, friend or associate, which should be integrated as an extenuating factor during sentencing.



It is clear from the above examples that there are discrepancies between countries regarding punishments for drug trafficking crimes, which further highlight significant differences in foreign policy agendas. Despite this, South Africa still does not have prisoner transfer treaties with other countries anywhere in the world, citing issues such as its commitment to fighting crime, fostering accountability in South Africans travelling abroad and the cost of prisoner transfers, as some of the reasons for not signing treaties (Davis, 2015:np). This lack implies that the South African government still deals with drug mules using a 'one size fits all' approach. It appears that as long as it is a drug-related matter, it will be treated as any other drug matter, which means that a person will be sentenced according to the quantity and type of drug they carried. There is no concession or classification for drug mules, dealers, manufacturers etc. Therefore, despite the small quantities drug mules could potentially carry, their crime will be classified as a drug crime as the government has not taken any steps to classify them as mules or a lesser transgressor than a drug dealer for example. In other countries, this classification usually counts towards mitigation of sentence.

## **2.7 ILLICIT DRUG TRADE IN SOUTH AFRICA**

The influx of illicit drugs into South Africa was proliferated by the availability of methaqualone tablets called mandrax and 'white pipe', a combination of tobacco, cannabis, and mandrax smoked through a broken bottle (Van Heerden & Minnaar, 2015:4; Peltzer et al., 2010:4). After the end of apartheid in 1994, there was an evolution in the drug market. Peltzer et al. (2010:4) attribute this evolution to political change and the coinciding advancement in transportation and communications, as well as banking structures which became more accessible to previously excluded portions of the population.

According to Hübschle (2014:42), Sub-Saharan Africa has seen an increase in organised crime networks involved in the international drug trade over the past decade. That assertion is made plausible by the fact that drug trafficking seems to have increased globally, with the cocaine and synthetic drug markets seemingly thriving (UNDOC, 2017:15). Notably, cocaine is most commonly couriered by being swallowed, concealed in luggage or on the person of drug mules (EMCDDA, 2012:24).

In the same vein, Blum (2016:16) notes that drug trafficking has become the most significant organised crime concern in South Africa, due to the consumption of hard drugs escalating during the past decade.

May (2017:25) draws attention to the fact that Africa's role as a transit point for drug trafficking has been the main contributing factor to the growth of drug production and consumption on the African continent. Hamilton (2016:7) highlights the fact that from 2004 to 2007, at least two distinctive trans-shipment centres surfaced in West Africa; one centred on Guinea-Bissau and Guinea, and the other in the Bight of Benin. In Africa, drugs are smuggled along the 'southern route' also known as the 'smack track', which are routes starting from Afghanistan, past Pakistan and Iran, across the Indian Ocean to East Africa (Bruwer, 2016:1). Carrier and Klantschnig (2012:90) attribute the emergence of South Africa as a prominent player in the heroin and cocaine market, to the change of domestic circumstances, more specifically the end of apartheid and full reintegration of South Africa into world markets which made it an attractive trade market.

Air transport is the predominant means to courier drugs into South Africa which alludes to how porous and easily accessible South African borders are, resultantly making the use of drug mules a feasible option for drug traffickers due to their merchandise making it through airport security often undetected. Carrier and Klantschnig (2012:96) reveal that in the early 1990s, South African drug mules were the first choice for West African drug traffickers because law enforcement had not yet started targeting them. Rall (2017:1), the director of Anti-Drug Forum SA, attributes this to the lack of adequate policing processes in place at airports.

In addition, Geldenhuys (2016a:29) highlights the role that corruption plays in enabling drug trafficking syndicates to bribe law enforcement officials, thus enabling mules with large quantities of drugs to pass through airport security undetected. According to the INCSR (2017:252), cocaine mainly reaches Johannesburg, South Africa by aeroplane from South America; while heroin usually arrives through the sea harbours of Tanzania, Kenya, and Mozambique and is then transported by land to South Africa. This situation is undoubtedly tied to the fact that South Africa is a crucial entry hub for Africa and the world and known as a secure country to commit crime from and in

(INCSR, 2017:252). South Africa's role as a transit country for the drug trade puts many South Africans at risk. The Cato Handbook for Policymakers (2017:718) has demonstrated that drug-producing, or transit nations, that are not effective in the fight against drug trafficking could become a hiding place for drug kingpins. In addition, drug money would flow into that country's economy, potentially corrupting institutions, including civil society. Nonetheless, the discussion above has shown that organised crime and drug trafficking are unreceptive to deterrence tactics; hence a criminal justice-focused approach is needed when dealing with such crimes. An example of same can be found in Ghana, which is set to become the first African country to decriminalise the private possession and use of all illicit drugs (Shaw & Bird, 2017:1).

According to Bybee (2012:72) porous borders, lack of employment, high levels of unemployment, poverty, and willing couriers are identified as factors which aid the drug trade through West Africa and why the drug market is thriving in Africa. There is a consensus as indicated by Bruwer (2016:1) that drug consignments sail as far as South Africa and Mozambique, or are shipped across borders from East Africa because South Africa possesses the infrastructure, financial services and networks of the global economy to enable onward shipment to destinations beyond Africa. Hübschle (2014:32) avers the development of various organised crime markets during the late 1970s and 1980s in South Africa, which is supported by Carrier and Klantschnig (2012:90) who underscore that the initial heroin and cocaine smugglers from Africa were usually unemployed, living in urban areas, overseas students who found themselves stranded without state scholarships, and agents trading in international goods. Bybee (2012:76) states that the discovery of numerous functioning methamphetamine laboratories in Nigeria and South Africa in 2011 and 2012, was a noteworthy revelation that perhaps Africa has advanced beyond being just a transit hub and has instead become an active manufacturer of illegal drugs. Bybee (2012:70) further explains that Africa is a prototype continent and it can be argued that its geographic proximity between the producing counties and consumer markets for many illicit goods has facilitated the continent's vulnerability to drug trafficking organisations.

On the other hand, there is a widely held belief that a shortage of jobs and the attraction of 'easy money' makes the prospect of drug trafficking extremely attractive to many. The large quantity of drugs seized by police in South Africa in 2017 is astounding. For example, according to Khoza (2017:1), in November, a Nigerian passenger was arrested at OR Tambo International Airport (ORTIA) for attempting to smuggle 15.1 kg of crystal meth into the country, estimated to be worth R 4.5 million. Two significant drug busts occurred at ORTIA in July. Cronje (2017:1) explains that 26 kg of cocaine valued at R 7.4 million was intercepted while in transit from São Paulo, while on the 10<sup>th</sup> of July, 197 kg's of cocaine concealed as shampoo, and worth R 50 million was seized from São Paulo on route to Australia. In June, Hyman (2017:1) reported that more than 250 boxes of cocaine, worth R 500 million, believed to be possibly the largest seizure of drugs, was found in Cape Town. A month prior, the Hawks confirmed a seizure of heroin worth more than R 100 million near the Kwa-Zulu Natal border (Pillay, 2017:1). Boshoff (2017:1) noted that in 2016 several heroin seizures in Mpumalanga seemed to indicate an increase in drug smuggling into South Africa across the border posts. 50 kg's of heroin totalling R 50 million was found at the Nkomazi border post in March 2016, 58 kg's in April at the Lebombo border post, and 90 kg's of heroin at Chrissiesmeer, Alzu Petroport on the N4 and Groblersburg border post in May (Boshoff, 2017:1). Perhaps more worrying than the sporadic arrests and seizures is the fact that Dias (2017:1) reports that Mexican cartels known worldwide for being extremely violent and dangerous, have infiltrated Cape Town, Johannesburg, and Bloemfontein. Other criminal groups include the Chinese Triads and Nigerian syndicates.

In addition to large drug busts being reported, the apprehension of South African female drug mules also frequently makes the news. In September 2017, a South African Airways female crew member was arrested in Perth Australia and found with 6 kg's of cocaine in her luggage (Head, 2017:1), while another woman was apprehended at the Cape Town International Airport when officers suspected her of having swallowed 100 drug pellets (Fischer, 2017:1). Stories following the same theme are many and alarming, yet, scholarly work on women and their involvement in the drug trade as mules in South Africa is sparse, and as a result, accurate statistical information is not readily available. Bailey (2013:136) emphasises that research about

females involved in drug smuggling supports the idea of victimisation and other challenging life circumstances, thus driving poor women into criminal activity, as opposed to analysing their motivations.

Hübschle (2014:43) acquiesces and outlines that South African female mules are often out of work, and/or financially stranded without travel experience, particularly overseas. Friedman (2014:110) claims that drug mules are often deceived into smuggling drugs into different countries and unquestionably used as pawns set up to be caught and “...*sacrificed as dead cows for piranhas.*” Meanwhile, Fleetwood (2011:377) has concluded, that in most instances, drug mules are first-time offenders who have no criminal record. Bailey (2013:118) concedes that there is evidence showing that women commit a crime for a variety of reasons and not all the reasons are linked to poverty and victimisation. Such divergent opinions highlight the need for this study.

Carrier and Klantschnig (2012:96) point out that good drug couriers are usually those from first world societies who are experienced international travellers, have valid visas and would usually not attract too much attention from law enforcement. For instance, there have been several reported high-profile cases of South Africa drug mules who are female offenders from middle/upper-class backgrounds, employed in stable professions; thus, suggesting that poverty is not always a motivating factor. This is evident in the 2006 case of Hazel Francis Ngubeni, the former South African ambassador to Singapore arrested for smuggling 9 kg's of heroin from Thailand into South Africa, consequently being arrested and convicted in New York for drug muling in 1999 while she was working as a flight attendant for South African Airways, (Herman, 2016:1). In a similar case, Nolubabalo Nobanda, a well-educated woman from a middle-class background, who matriculated from a private girl's schools and then attended the University of Witwatersrand, was convicted as a drug mule in Thailand when she was caught with drugs in her dreadlocks (Smillie & Bailey, 2011:1).

The case of Sheryl Cwele, ex-wife of Siyabonga Cwele, the former Minister of State Security, sparked great interest in the country due to the high-profile characters involved. Sheryl Cwele was found guilty and sentenced to 20 years in prison for

conspiring with a Nigerian counterpart to recruit two female drug mules to transport drugs to Brazil. Her sentence was reduced to twelve years on appeal, while the mule remained in jail in Brazil (Ramsayi, 2013:1). Nokwazi Memela, a working mother of two, from Alexandra township in Johannesburg, was recruited by her 'miracle-performing' Nigerian church pastors after being promised 'a better life' in 2005 (Manala, 2017:1). Overall, these cases support the view that research into female criminality has assumed that women commit crimes - such as being drug mules - due to 'difficult life circumstances' which might not always be a valid assumption in the absence of other evidence (Bailey, 2013:118).

The drug trade in Africa is deemed to be more hazardous on third world states, and hence it has not yet affected US security interests or global stability and, according to Brown (2012:19) is seemingly not a high area of concern. In their study which focused on illicit drug use and treatment in South Africa, Peltzer et al. (2010:11) found that the nature and magnitude of illicit drug trafficking, drug use and its associated problems, seemed to be growing in South Africa mainly due to political, economic and social changes that have taken place. Similarly, the copious quantities intercepted and seized by police as denoted above, seem to corroborate this assertion. All indications are that South Africa will continue to grow as a conduit for drugs, as stated in the US State Department 2017 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, which confirmed that trafficking and drug consumption was on an upward trajectory in 2016 (INCSR, 2017:252). However, Bybee (2012:84) summarises the drug situation outlining what many Africanists believe; which is that soon religious and ethnic wars will no longer be the issues that dominate Africa, but instead, transnational organised crime syndicates will become the greatest threat to stability in Africa. In this regard, Van Heerden and Minnaar (2015:3) note that there is a lack of combined comprehensive data pertaining to the detailed features of drug supply, demand, trafficking and smuggling in South Africa, thereby making it difficult to put the South African drug trafficking and mule market into proper perspective.

## **2.8 DRUG MULES IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT**

Urquiza-Haas (2017:310) outlines two different interpretations supporting legal theories on drug mules, which is either drug mules are victims of organised crime who

have been taken advantage of or are individuals who have failed at managing their personal life circumstances. The lack of information regarding female drug mules in South Africa makes it difficult to give an informed view on what motivates women to become drug mules. For instance, the only information available on the DIRCO website is advice about what people should do when arrested out of South Africa, and contact details for the embassies in the country of arrest. Little information is available about the number of South Africans arrested for drug-related offences in the country and abroad, from the DIRCO, SAPS, or the DCS. It is also concerning to note that information on the DIRCO website was last updated on the 14<sup>th</sup> of May 2014.

The South African Revenue Service website offers a bit more information about drug-related crimes compared to the entities mentioned above, including information about the number of arrests, drug quantities seized and intended destinations for the drugs. However, the information is also limited as it does not always include specific details about gender, motivations, and what happened after apprehension. Available information is usually limited to sporadic information from news or media reports. For example, Ndenze (2013:np) reported that 281 drug mules had been arrested at ORTIA, 80 of which were female, which was reported to the author by Brigadier Ebrahim Kadwa of SAPS. The origin of statistics such as these is unclear.

A summary of crime statistics from 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015 reflects that 237 South Africans had been arrested as drug mules out of the country, while Interpol recorded the arrest of 300 drug mules destined for South Africa (SAPS, 2015:10). The available 2016/2017 statistics on the SAPS website show that 107 379 people were arrested for drug-related crimes during that period, a 14% increase from the 2015/2016 statistics. These statistics only allude to drug-related crime and do not include information about what type of drug-related crimes were committed or where they were committed. Currently, the 2018/2019 drug-related crime arrests amount to 81 344, which have significantly decreased from the past three years (SAPS, 2018:np). Since the crimes are not demarcated into a type of drug crime, it is unknown if the number of convicted drug mules arrested and sentenced in the country has dropped or increased within the overall mean. Mvumvu (2017:1) reports that the African National Congress Peace and Stability Committee confirmed that there were approximately 7 700 foreign prisoners in South African prisons with 60% of those

serving time for petty crimes, however, again, this report does not stipulate what the specific crimes are. The Institute of Security Studies (ISS), also relayed the same sentiments, stating that the official crime figures released by SAPS do not report enough information about the identity or country of origin regarding perpetrators or suspects, which makes it challenging to categorise crimes and perpetrators accurately (Ewi, 2017:1). Van Heerden and Minnaar (2015:3) concur, maintaining that there is a definite lack of comprehensive information in South Africa regarding drug supply, demand, trafficking and smuggling as a whole, except for general summaries presented in the United Nations World Drug Reports. The recording of precise figures is infrequent, which makes it difficult to establish a database of correct information accurately. Currently, more accurate, credible information on drug mules and arrests can be found on [www.lockedup.co.za](http://www.lockedup.co.za) a registered nonprofit organisation started by Patricia Gerber in 2008. The primary aim of this organisation is to raise awareness about recruitment as a drug mule, implications of being a drug mule, and being imprisoned abroad inclusive of support offered to the families of offenders.

More research is needed in South Africa, and globally, focusing on female drug mules. As stipulated in the previous chapter, there is not enough information or valid research available to help put awareness campaigns and programmes into place. Such programmes will help educate and highlight the cause and effect of drug muling. The research will also aid international embassies, law enforcement and government officials to understand better what motivates people, especially women, to commit drug trafficking crimes. This will, in the end, aid the government to establish improved and effective management and prevention programmes.

## **2.9 CHAPTER CONCLUSION**

This chapter set out to examine drug trafficking as a phenomenon, its origins, its global impact, and what the current global policies and sanctions are in regard thereto. There is minimal reliable information available in respect of women in the drug trafficking trade even though there is much reported on them as drug mules by the popular media. In summary, it has been shown that drug trafficking is a lucrative business, the upshot of which spreads far and wide, thus ensuring that it cannot be easily eradicated. Much needs to be done in terms of the global policy as the above discussion highlights,



especially in the differences between drug trafficking laws and punishments between countries, which underscores the problem that there is still an apparent lack of consensus on how to deal with drug trafficking on a global scale. In general, therefore, it seems that decriminalisation and harm minimisation seems to be the preferred responses; however, that does not deal with the other crimes that accompany drug trafficking as mentioned above. Additionally, how illicit goods are transported around the globe is continuously evolving according to Hamilton (2016:3), because as authorities' crackdown in one area, new routes are developed, laws change, conflict arises, and the social climate changes.

The Cato Handbook for Policy Makers (2017:716) posits that even if a prohibition against drugs is enforced, research illustrates that the demand for drugs is unyielding and, irrespective of price increases, consumption remains more or less the same.

Despite being condensed, this chapter offers some insight into further research that should be undertaken. More research is required to determine how beneficial it would be to explore the other ways to control the flow of drugs in order to control the consequences that come from their illicit nature. The current strategies of severe punishment combined with draconian treatment conditions used to deter prospective risk-takers such as manufacturers, dealers, and mules, may work to a certain extent; however, neither seems to have worked exceptionally well, if the current drug statistics mentioned above are anything to go by. Van Heerden (2014:40) highlights that even though the magnitude of the drug phenomenon and drug market cannot be easily confirmed from available literature, an inference can be drawn that there is a thriving existing drug market in South Africa. Hence, the argument presented by Bailey (2013:119), citing the need to evaluate oversimplified depictions of male and female criminality in the drug industry, is essential. In terms of women, it is slightly challenging to do due to the limited data and information available. There are some scholarly research articles written by investigative journalists available; however, there is no significant, empirical analysis on the motivations of women becoming drug mules currently available.

During this research, other motives will be explored that may not be directly linked to money, but which are still profitable to the women who are involved. What this research aims to do is understand the core motives for being drug mules at the expense of freedom and sometimes life. The next chapter will include a more in-depth review of drug mule motivation and causation, as well as criminological theory explaining what motivates drug mules.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **LITERATURE OVERVIEW AND THEORETICAL EXPOSITION OF FEMALE MOTIVES TO BECOME DRUG MULES**

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#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

When it comes to female drug mules, motivation is usually based on a variety of reasons which may constitute a single-themed reason or a combination of factors ranging between socio-economic circumstances and personal reasons. Research has shown that 70% of people involved in drug trafficking are men, even though it is accepted that the gender of traffickers is not consistently reported (Urquiza-Haas, 2017:310).

In South Africa, female drug mules are often reported on in the news after being apprehended; still, Kensy, Stengel, Nougier and Birgin (2012:3) maintain that comprehensive statistics and information about female drug smugglers are scarce even though it is estimated that about 20% of drug traffickers are women. On the other hand, Fleetwood and Seal (2017:358), argue that women account for 30% of global drug trafficking arrests and the majority of these arrests include drug mules. However, extraordinarily little is known about who these women are, where they come from, why they do what they do, and what motivates them to do so. Early attention to female drug mules was pioneered by Penny Green, an Australian criminologist, who examined female motivations for becoming drug mules including their experiences of being drug mules within the framework of the English and Welsh criminal justice system (Fleetwood, 2017:279). Within the African continent, Carrier and Klantschnig (2012:89-90) suggest that African countries went through an economic crisis during the 1970s and 1980s, including, structural adjustments which negatively affected large sections of African societies. The result was the advent of African cocaine and heroin smugglers who were the most affected by the economic crisis and structural adjustments which included unemployment, trading of international goods and students stranded overseas (Carrier and Klantschnig, 2012:90). This crisis made it

easier to employ Africans as drug mules. Although this research is based in South Africa, relevant literature from all over the world was used as there is a dearth of information about South African female drug mules and their motivation. Fleetwood and Seal (2017:360) indeed claim that in the United Kingdom, many women arrested for being drug mules are foreigners and/or ethnic minorities, primarily motivated by poverty.

This chapter will explore motivating factors which encourage women to become drug mules. Literature has revealed that female offender motives to become drug mules are often more complicated than what research implies. A criminological theoretical analysis of said motives is also presented in this chapter. The chapter will commence with a discussion of selected myths pertaining to female drug mules.

### **3.2 MYTHS PERTAINING TO FEMALE DRUG MULES**

The current leading researcher on female drug mules is Jennifer Fleetwood, a criminology lecturer at the University of Leicester who has written extensively about female drug mules. Fleetwood has conducted many studies including writing scholarly articles on drug mules, drug trafficking and gender discourse about drug mules in the drug trade. Fleetwood (2013:2) claims that the generalisability of female drug mules found in research is problematic, so much so that research contains more myths than facts. Fleetwood (2013:2-4) highlighted a few myths about drug mules; one being that drug mules are just collateral damage, which is false because as it stands, it was identified that current global drug policies are expressly set out to target low-level offenders as a way of showing commitment toward the fight against drugs (Fleetwood, 2013:2).

Another oft-cited myth is that women are coerced into becoming drug mules. Fleetwood (2013:2) maintains that only a small number of mules are directly coerced while the majority are indirectly coerced because even drug mules who are willing and informed are not always told the complete truth about what they are carrying or penalties they may face if apprehended. Hence, they are virtually unaware of the actual enormity of what their role as a drug mule entails. Case in point is that of Annabella Momphe, a school principal from Durban, Kwa-Zulu Natal, who was arrested

in London carrying drugs. According to her, she was not fully aware of what she was carrying, although she suspected it was indeed an illicit substance. On investigation, it became apparent that she was carrying the drugs to settle her husband's gambling debts (Griffiths, 2012:np). Momple was therefore vulnerable to be coerced due to her social circumstances.

Another myth is that drug mules can seek help from the police once they land at their destination. Fleetwood (2013:2) dispels this myth by pointing out that in the criminal justice system, women are routinely not taken seriously when they seek help from authorities for crimes that directly affect them. In addition, drug mules are intentionally given limited information, thus making it unlikely for mules to report anything to the police.

Another myth is that people caught smuggling drugs deserve the death penalty. In this regard, Fleetwood (2013:3-4) argues that according to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions, drug offences do not constitute 'most serious crimes' ergo, executions are in reality a violation of international human rights laws. The death penalty myth is popular in the drug mule discourse as it is believed that it serves as an effective deterrent. Fleetwood (2013:4) postulates that academic evidence does not support the contention that severe penalties prevent crime. Further, and to put it blatantly, the death of a few drug mules under state order would do very little to affect the grander scheme of drug smuggling and cartels since the mules are considered collateral damage in most instances. As previously alluded to, the motivations for women to become drug mules are diverse. Hence, it can be assumed that these differences will also apply to prevention and management strategies.

### **3.3 DRUG MULES: MOTIVATING FACTORS**

Campbell (2008:248) hypothesises that female motivations are varied, ranging from financial reasons to women seeking independence from men, while, Bailey (2013:121) intimates that feminist explanations of crime often link female delinquency to difficult life circumstances such as poverty, childhood and adult abuse, neglect and drug dependency. In contrast, Fleetwood (2013:1) maintains that research in drug

trafficking crimes has found that although females choose to get involved in drug trafficking voluntarily, they are motivated by poverty, and financial hardships and instances involving coercion and threats are the exceptions rather than the norm. This assertion speaks to the agency that women have in choosing their paths and doing whatever it takes to achieve the goals they set for themselves. It is necessary to understand motivations better considering the decision's females make to become drug mules. For example, if a person were asked 'why did you become a thief?', you may get an answer such as 'because I could not find a job'. However, when asked 'what motivates you to carry on thieving?' you may be given reasons such as 'because it gives me a thrill,' or 'I have constant access to money' or 'because I do not have to work for a boss'. In essence, the reason for doing something is based on a careful thought process. Motivation is furthermore not static and may change during the period women act as drug mules.

This chapter will explore the motives that female mules put forward for accepting and getting involved in the drug trade as drug mules. Based on the various available literature consulted, several common motivating factors were identified that almost always surface amongst female drug mules, to wit poverty, financial stress, romantic relationship influence, victimisation, difficult life circumstances and financial reward. Due to victimisation being a broad focus area, it will be further be segmented to include abuse, coercion, intimidation, emotional dependence, and the use of trickery in engaging potential drug mules. When conducting academic research, it is always essential to include a review of available literature as it is an indication of the gap in the research being conducted. For this research, it is crucial to separate female drug mules and group them into two groups, that is, those who are unwitting victims mainly because of their naïveté, use of coercion and/or being duped and those mules who were willing participants. It is vital that female drug mules are not boxed into one category and that other dimensions are explored when it comes to drug mule motivations.

### **3.3.1 Socio-economic factors**

Bhorat, Lilienstein, Monnakgotla, Thornton, and van der Zee (2017:1) identified three socio-economic factors that could potentially motivate individuals to become involved in criminal activities, namely unemployment, income levels and levels of inequality.

Research focusing on drug mules found that one of the primary reasons often cited by drug mules when they are arrested is that they did it for money or lack thereof. Singer et al. (2013:122) admit that to a certain extent, poverty creates a labour class in the drug trade. As such, it is perceivable that those who are employed as mules may be doing so because of poverty or some economic hardship, basically doing what must be done to earn a living. However, Fleetwood (2014:30) cautions that the 'sometimes problematic' poverty-only narrative, raises an important question as to why some poverty-stricken women commit a crime while others do not. Harris (2011b:35) found that several studies have proven that drug mules are motivated by different factors, as opposed to other types of offending such as gang membership; in particular, drug mules were motivated by need rather than greed which is often compelled by poverty, lack of opportunities, and some form of threat. Likewise, Fleetwood (2014:28) concedes that when facing adversities and unemployment for example, 'economic hardship' usually affects women more severely than it does men, which inadvertently pushes women towards illegal activities such as the drug-related crimes. Similarly, Kensy et al. (2012:3) agree, claiming that the main determinants for the increase of women partaking in trafficking, is due to financial difficulties, lack of proper work opportunities and the need to provide suitable living and education for their children. Schemenauer (2012:89) avers that according to the law enforcement officials she interviewed, many female drug mules claimed to do so because they were poor and struggling to make ends meet.

Bhorat et al. (2017:1) state that South Africa has the highest unemployment rate in the world, with 55% of South Africans being unemployed, the majority of which are black South Africans. According to law enforcement officials interviewed by Schemenauer (2012:89), many female drug mules claimed to do so because they were poor and struggling to make ends meet. This is supported by research by Bhorat et al. (2017:1) who state that the poverty and inequality levels in South Africa are the highest if compared to South African counterparts in developing countries. Be that as it may, Fleetwood (2014:30) opines that although it is still unclear how poverty influences a women's choice to offend, she concedes that in some instances poverty leads women to become more vulnerable to exploitation by male drug dealers, or the perception that being a drug mule as a form of survival during economic hardships is an acceptable response to need. Singer et al. (2013:127) highlight the fact that drug mules are often

considered as faceless, functional, and disposable by drug organisations and ultimately exploited because of their poverty and need.

### **3.3.2 Romantic partners, family, and friends**

Research has identified a link between the role that families, intimate partners, friends and social interactions play when women choose to become drug mules (Van San & Sikkens, 2017:343). Upon further probing of participants to this study, for example, it was found that most women got involved as drug mules through their family and social networks, which often include romantic partners, friends and other acquaintances encountered through the drug mule's social networks (Van San & Sikkens, 2017:348-349). Furthermore, Van San and Sikkens (2017:348-349) highlight that although some opportunities to participate in the drug trade were created through friend and family networks, other opportunities were created due to the normalising of participation in the drug trade by close associates.

Research indicates that women act as drug mules due to emotional or abusive spouses, partners or lovers who usually coerce them into smuggling drugs (Bailey, 2013:122; Hübschle, 2014:43). However, it has yet to be categorically proven that the involvement of romantic partners in women being drug mules is due to victimisation or abuse of some form, and thus it varies on a case by case basis. On the other hand, in her study, Bailey (2013:135-136) found only one participant that asserted that her motives were based on a choice made for her by her partner. Campbell (2008:237) posits that there is sometimes a symbiotic relationship between romantic partners, women and their choice to become drug mules because the women are forced into supporting their romantic partners financially or in terms of a debt owed (usually to a nefarious or criminal lender).

According to Smallhorn (2018:419), there are women deemed less culpable because they specifically engage in crime solely based on their partners' involvement, referred to as 'women in relationship' or 'women of circumstance.' An example of a 'woman in relationship' or 'woman of circumstance' is Annabella Momphe, a principal of a school in Durban, who was arrested in London in 2011 after being apprehended and found carrying 2,5 kg of cocaine in her luggage. She became a drug mule because of a



substantial gambling debt incurred by her second husband, who turned out to be a gambling addict (Griffiths, 2012:np). The reason she committed the crime was simply because of the man she was involved with and her romantic relationship which in this case classifies her as 'women in relationship,' and also his addiction which makes her part of 'women of circumstance.' Dastile (2013:283) interviewed another 'women of circumstance' and 'women in relationship', who due to her circumstance of being an illegal immigrant, was sold to her then intimate partner, who in turn forced her to recruit South African women as drug mules.

Joseph and Goosen (2013:np) describe the experiences of Vanessa Goosen, which involve being approached by an 'acquaintance' of the father of her then-unborn baby asking her to carry books for him. Her particular case ties into the assertion that women are more likely to accept being sent by someone they are acquainted with or trust rather than a random person with whom they have no ties. This is further supported by The Sentencing Council (2011:4) who when interviewing offenders arrested at airports in the United Kingdom, proffered that some of the respondents conceded that they had been introduced to 'someone who could help them', by friends or family, or a 'friend of a friend'. The key recurring theme in the sentencing council research was that female drug mule involvement was orchestrated by someone who they were familiar with, and/or someone they trusted. O'Hagan and Harvey (2016:8) agree, declaring that social ties and familial connections can play a vital role in an individual's motivation, which is seen, for example, when young people observe their relatives' way of life and then choose to continue on the same path as that is all they know. Tshili (2016:np) states that approximately 200 Zimbabweans, majority being women, are on death row in China after allegedly being duped by their Nigerian boyfriends leading to them being arrested for drug trafficking. Dastile (2013:283) supports this assertion based on her interview with a South African named Mary, who was recruited and lured by her Nigerian live-in-lover into becoming a drug mule. Even though the women could be classified as victims as they were duped, the fact remains that they were fooled by an intimate partner, family members or someone they trusted.

### 3.3.3 Victimisation motives

The theory of victimisation of female drug mules is supported by Hübschle (2014:43), who researched females involved in organised crime. She found that mules in the South African context, are often unemployed, unfamiliar with travel, especially overseas and stranded financially and unable to find gainful employment (Ackerman, 2014:25). Victimisation of drug mules is broad and depending on different authors, may fall into various categories such as abuse, coercion, intimidation, obligation, being tricked, swindled, hoodwinked, and/or deceived. Women are often painted as victims when female criminality is explained, linking them too tricky circumstances such as disadvantaged backgrounds, lack of employment, lack of education, abuse, and neglect (Bailey, 2013:121). Numerous studies in the field of drug trafficking and smuggling, have reinforced the idea of victimisation of women, including general life hardships as a reason for being propelled into criminality. Fleetwood (2015b:965) outlines that perceptions about women being vulnerable victims of traffickers can be found in movies and also in general views about gender and nationhood, thus stereotyping female participation in the drug industry. Caulkins, Burnett and Leslie (2009:84) found that some form of coercion, which involved death threats, threats of harm to family members as well as being tricked were the second most frequently reported reasons motivating individuals to become drug mules. Additionally, Schemenauer (2012:90) claims that the gullibility and inexperience of drug mules further emphasise the discourse about victimisation. For example, Nair (2013:np) reported for the Star Newspaper that gullible drug mules from Kwa-Zulu Natal profiled by crime intelligence were found to be inexperienced travellers who were easily convinced into accepting assignments abroad which were in turn funded by rich drug lords whom they met in local nightclubs, universities and shelters. The drug lords promised them exotic holidays, fancy clothing, and cash.

Urquiza-Haas (2017:310) states that often legal, policy and academic discussions label drug mules as vulnerable offenders from marginalised groups despite the concept of vulnerability being vague. Contradictory to this opinion, South Africa is one of few countries that have a definition for 'abuse of vulnerability'. According to section 4(1) of the Prevention and Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act (7/2013) define abuse of vulnerability as "*any abuse that leads a person to believe that he or she has*

*no reasonable alternative but to submit to exploitation, and includes but is not limited to taking advantage of the vulnerabilities of that person resulting from –*

- *The person having entered or remained in the Republic illegally or without proper documentation*
- *pregnancy*
- *any disability of the person*
- *addiction to the use of any dependence-producing substance*
- *being a child*
- *social circumstances; or*
- *economic circumstances.”*

The vulnerability of drug mules is of significance in this study. Although not generally done in literature, it is of importance to differentiate between self-employed drug mules or mules that choose this lifestyle because of greed and those that become drug mules due to adverse life circumstances. Hence, it becomes harder to differentiate when it comes to their level of vulnerability as legally, policy-wise, and academically, mules are classified as vulnerable but for different and often divergent reasons. With regards to drug mules, abuse of their vulnerability is usually linked to their social and economic circumstances. Urquiza-Haas (2017:313) underscores the fact that due to uncertain and/or unregulated labour conditions socially and economically marginalised men and women will often be at risk of exploitation. Similarly, Bailey (2013:17) established that female motivations for becoming drug mules were ignored entirely and generalised based on preconceived ideas, often gleaned from the narrative that women are unwilling, victimised participants due to difficult life circumstances. Fleetwood (2015b:965) further adds that the idea that drug mules are victims supports the discussion that traffickers are evil and thus exploit drug mules.

O'Hagan and Harvey (2016:8) list five common factors linked to why individuals choose to partake in drug trafficking; namely punishment, self-identity or image, abuse or drug abuse, social ties, and life changes. Punishment is common in the drug mule discourse whereby offenders claim to have been forced, coerced, threatened, and generally made to feel intimidated. According to O'Hagan and Harvey (2016:8), punishment is also linked to the sanctions meted out by authorities if a drug mule is arrested or punishment by other traffickers which includes being killed by other traffickers if a mule fails to follow their directive.

The summary of findings in current literature concerning drug mules is that mules are specially selected to fail to complete a successful drug trip, in other words, they are 'dead cows for piranhas', victims of deception tricked to merely serve as decoys to take away attention from the professional drug smugglers (Friedman, 2014:np, SABC, 2013a; Unlu & Ekici, 2012:300). Hübschle (2014:43) also emphasises the trend of 'dead cows for piranhas' identified by South American authorities. An example of a woman who claimed she was innocent and that she was tricked into the offence is Vanessa Goosen, a former beauty queen who was arrested in 1994 after being allegedly duped into transporting heroin hidden in books she was asked to deliver for someone else (Reddy, 2017:np). Goredema, a senior researcher from the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), states that even though the ISS has no data regarding the use of decoys or 'dead cows for piranhas' in South Africa, it is a fact that the strategy of decoys is employed by drug cartels (Pillay & Medley, 2012:np).

Smith and Gowland (2014:397) admit that by the nature of their involvement, drug mules are often vulnerable and exploited by more sophisticated criminals who conduct business at any cost. Urquiza-Haas (2017:313) further elucidates by associating vulnerability with previously disadvantaged groups where race, ethnicity, nationality, legal status, gender, disability, and age, predispose specific individuals to physical or emotional harm or puts them at the risk of abuse or neglect. In the same vein, Smallhorn (2018:419) argues that inequality in sentencing is not only relative to gender but is linked to race and class where many female offenders in prisons are *"...disproportionately people of colour, overwhelmingly poor and low-income, survivors of violence and trauma, and have high rates of physical and mental illness and substance use."* Schemenauer (2012:85) supports the assertion that the threat of illicit drugs is given meaning through discussions that centre on nationality, gender, race, class, and sexuality.

Urquiza-Haas (2017:309-310) argues that convicted drug mules have historically received very long sentences; making claims that mules are part of a vulnerable population, or they belong to marginalised groups, and as such, they are categorised as being under-employed, single parents, indigenous and black women. Fleetwood and Urquiza-Haas (2011:199) state that when it comes to sentencing of drug mules, women are often sentenced disproportionately because the minimum sentences they

are handed down do not reflect the significance of poverty and family circumstances. For instance, Sumter, Berger-Hill, Whitaker, and Wood (2017:np), identified various reasons why women who come from different countries, various ethnicities, ages, and levels of education, chose to become drug mules. The majority of women claimed that they were deceived into smuggling drugs, while a slightly lesser number conceded that they smuggled drugs for extra money; one woman claimed it was not her decision while the last woman declared that she did so to protect her daughter's father (Sumter et al., 2017:np). In conclusion, Sumter et al. (2017:np) report that 50% of the women they interviewed claimed they had been hoodwinked. This highlights the fact that drug mules are generally exploited as they are not paid much but are expected to carry the maximum risk. Fleetwood (2015b:969) points out that notwithstanding these women's involvement in the drug trade as victims, they do not receive lesser punishments. The Sentencing Council in the United Kingdom conducted a study in 2011 which indicated that over 50% of the interviewees claimed to have been tricked or deceived because they were unaware that they were carrying drugs even though they knew that it might have been something illegal (Sentencing Council, 2011:4). The Report further states that some of the respondents admitted to being intimidated or coerced since they were either chaperoned and had their travel documents confiscated or received death threats (Sentencing Council, 2011:4). When mentioning elements of coercion, Schemenauer (2012:90-91) avers that the level of coercion involved included being micromanaged and told what and what not to say. Women who have been coerced into being drug mules make claims that being micromanaged, moderated in what to say or not to say and intimidated, usually rendered them vulnerable and left them without much choice. The EMCDDA (2012:19) acknowledges that when it comes to drug mules, the levels of coercion "*...are neither well defined nor well studied...*" though, some form of duress is noted despite drug mules being remunerated for the job. Nonetheless, Fleetwood (2017:284), suggests that further research into the role and function of coercion and duress as motivating factors is needed.

Ecuador has shown much interest in the concept of drug mules being viewed as victims as opposed to outright criminals. According to Tegel (2014:np) between 2007 and 2017, the Ecuadorian president pardoned more than 2 000 convicted drug mules and effected a new law in August 2014, which classifies low-level drug mules as drug cartel victims thus allowing for a reduced sentence or mitigation of sentence. The

prime objective of this law is to decriminalise poverty, as it is assumed that most mules come from low-income families with limited education. Such is the insignificance of mules in the fight against drugs that in the 1980s Portugal reduced drug mule sentences from an average of 8 years' imprisonment to 5 years in the late 1990s, and currently uses suspended sentences in response to most cases of drug muling (Harris, 2011b:32).

### **3.3.4 Human trafficking**

Another narrative associated with drug mules and victimisation is that of human trafficking. In some media reports and literature, drug mules have been linked to human trafficking. Gerry, Harré, Naibaho, Muraszkievicz and Boister (2018:167) conducted a case study in Indonesia, highlighting the growing occurrence of people being trafficked and used as drug mules. Human trafficking is a complex phenomenon which must display specific elements for the crime to be considered human trafficking. The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially women and children, supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (United Nations, 2000.) defines human trafficking or trafficking in persons as:

*“...the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.”*

An example of a drug mule case likened to human trafficking is that of Nolubabalo 'Babsie' Nobanda who was found with drugs in her dreadlocks. Friedman (2014:np) classifies her case as human trafficking based on the way she was recruited. Nolubabalo was recruited by her friend under the guise of going to get a job as a South African distributor of hair products. Once she arrived in Brazil, she was put up in a hotel with other women and told she would have to travel via Bangkok to drop off drugs before returning home. She was arrested at the Bangkok Airport (Hollands, 2015:1). Another example of how a person could be recruited under pretence into being a mule can be explained through the story of Nono, who asserts that she responded to a newspaper advert to work in a Nepalese shoe factory, only to arrive in Nepal and be

expected to work as a drug mule (Friedman, 2014:np). These accounts support the discoveries of Fleetwood (2015b:964) who states that because drug couriers are often moved around from one nation to the next, being a drug mule could be considered a form of human trafficking. Shelley (2012:247) concurs, maintaining that refugees or human smuggling especially in Africa, can inadvertently become human trafficking as drug mules usually cannot personally afford to transport themselves back home, and thus they are often expected to pay their passage by being drug mules. Urquiza-Haas (2017:319) asserts that a constitutive element in the crime of human trafficking is termed 'abuse of vulnerability.' This means that the examples of Nolubabalo and Nono could also be used as human trafficking case studies as they were lured under false pretense, held captive and forced to become drug mules.

### **3.3.5 Life choices: empowerment, excitement, and lifestyle**

As discussed previously, when it comes to women and their involvement in crime, the general assumption is that most women are victims who lack agency when deciding whether to partake in criminal activities or not. Furthermore, representations of female criminality in literature are usually based on patriarchal and gender discourses, viewed through the experiences of men, often resulting in the stereotypical view of women being reinforced (Bailey 2013:119; Schemenauer, 2012:84). According to Weare (2013:337) who studies gender discourses particularly relating to female murderers, it is generally assumed that women are inherently passive and gentle beings, however, by attaching such labels to women, the agency in decision making is denied when acting in a particular manner. Bailey (2013:120) further explains that in literature, males are commonly seen as the deviant ones, the strategists, while their female counterparts are usually driven to commit crime due to being victimised. Contradictory to these beliefs Bailey (2013:135) asserts that female motivations for drug smuggling could be categorised into two main parts, namely; victimisation and non-passive participation; non-passive participation being that people chose to smuggle because of self-confessed greed and excitement.

Women are sometimes also depicted as being absent role players in the drug trade whereby their roles as drug mules are described as being exploitative, powerless, minimal, subservient, and eventually incapable of making their own decisions. For

example, Singer et al. (2013:127) indicate that although many mules are men, the number of Nigerian women hired to carry drugs via air from Nigeria to Spain and England has increased. This could mean that women are making independent decisions regarding involvement in criminal activities as a study by Klein (2009:392-393) stipulates, and thus that these women were aware of their culpability. The increased number of women in prisons is supported by Fleetwood and Seal (2017:363) who state that the number of women in prison worldwide has increased by 50% since 2000, mainly due to drug offences. Still, Klein (2009:392-393) cautions that even though the Nigerian drug mules were aware of their culpability, it does not take away from the fact that they may be hapless scapegoats used as decoys.

Fleetwood conducted a study about drug mules where the core focus of the research was the participants' decision-making and rationale. Concerning the female research participants, Fleetwood (2014:85-87) ascertained that while some female participants were confined to the typical gender roles that restricted them, and in turn influenced their choices; others chose to be drug mules because they loved the thrill and better lifestyle being drug mules afforded them. This finding was controversial because it was in contrast with the discourse of females usually being viewed as coerced, threatened and deceived into being drug mules. Instead, Fleetwood (2014:95) postulates that females demonstrated a considerable amount of organisation; they live complex lives where various motives influence the decisions; they make to be drug mules. It was further demonstrated that the current victim discourse about women should be questioned in that the women who were interviewed were neither victims nor 'bad-girls' based on media perceptions, but instead multi-faceted human beings who give serious thought to the good and bad choices they make about their lives (Fleetwood, 2011:132).

According to Sutton (2018:1), when Melina Roberge, a 24-year-old Canadian woman, was apprehended on a cruise ship while smuggling drugs into Australia, she claimed she did it for Instagram likes, for example. Burt and Simons (2013:1330) state that some people participate in crime because they need a rush, excitement, or thrills, which they expect their delinquency will bring. Some of the women interviewed by Friedman (2012:np) admitted that they were willing participants who classified themselves as recruiters and professional mules, with one of the ladies claiming to



now be retired and 'out of the game'. These women are categorised as high-level or mid-level smugglers because of the benefits they receive from drug trafficking, which are perceived to be a conduit for female empowerment (Campbell, 2008:238).

Women who classify themselves as being above the victim label by knowingly trafficking drugs and being professionally dressed to give the sense of a middle-class business traveller are called *vamps*, according to Schemenauer (2012:92). Geldenhuys (2016a:27) and Van Heerden and Minnaar (2016:22) introduce another type of mule - the professional drug mule - who smuggles drugs for a living and does it many times throughout their lifetime, seldom being caught. Because of this differentiation, the assertion can be made that motives for being a drug mule are different in every case.

Singer et al. (2013:127) posit that the principle motivating factor revealed from their interviews with apprehended drug mules is the relatively high lump sum payment they were to receive in comparison to the limited income scope from local employment alternatives available. In this regard, Bailey (2013:134) cautioned that the narrative of women being victims, while men are viewed as the antagonists, was not necessarily accurate. Her study revealed that female criminality is not only motivated by poverty or desperation but a desire for financial freedom and material wealth. A British study highlighted various motivations for smuggling drugs and found that the allure of easy money was the most common excuse given for why people elect to be drug mules (Caulkins et al., 2009:84).

The above being said, female offenders are not all similar and cannot be considered a homogenous group. Campbell (2008:235) puts forward that for one to understand how certain crimes occur, one must investigate specific behaviours and causal motivators linked to a specific crime, rather than just gendered roles. Klein (2009:392) made a note of the fact that some Nigerians, for example, illustrate an entrepreneurial spirit and determination to take control of their own lives by actively “...*shaping solutions to their existential problems...*” when electing to become drug mules. Simply put, this means that some female mules are motivated by their life circumstances which include a lack of financial security and power. Moreover, Klein (2009:392) stated that the majority of drug mules were shrewd even though some were uneducated.

They were breadwinners and primary caregivers for their families who were fully cognizant of the risk they are taking. When it comes to Nigerian female drug mules, Klein (2009:392) posits that they must not be classified as mules, as most of them were neither duped nor manipulated, but instead carried drugs to better themselves financially and socially.

The Sentencing Council (2011:5) found that the women who knew that they were carrying drugs were not too concerned with the risks as they thought they would not get caught and if they were, assumed that they would receive custodial sentences. This is supported by Fleetwood (2015b:964) who states that although it may be difficult to prove, it is very seldom that people carry drugs unknowingly. Carrier and Klantschnig (2012:96) propose that good couriers are classified as those who have some international travel experience and do not come from impoverished societies, but that their financial position must be precarious enough to perceive the job as an acceptable risk.

The EMCDDA argues that there is not a clear comprehension regarding the participation of drug mules in the drug trade as they are often portrayed as unwilling or partially willing participants (EMCDDA, 2012:19). Kensy et al. (2012:3) make a distinction between drug mules and drug traffickers; the latter are classified as being higher level in the organisation, while mules are classified as low-level individuals transporting drugs due to poverty and desperation. Similarly, Van Heerden and Minnaar (2016:21) identify two types of drug mules, specifically, self-employed drug mules and mules recruited by syndicates. The EMCDDA (2012:19) classifies the level of organisation of a self-employed courier as medium to high, whereas the level of organisation of a drug mule is low. Likewise, the commercial interests of a self-employed courier are medium to high and that of a drug mules' medium to low. This classification means that self-employed couriers view the drug trade as their primary income source and as such have their distribution networks - including planning their activities - as opposed to mules for whom the drug trade may also be their sole income, however that income is dependent on them providing a service to drug cartels.

Drug abuse is another factor that is frequently mentioned in the drug mule discussion, where individuals have mentioned that their personal consumption and addiction

motivated their choices. Their addiction is often used as a lure to entice individuals into becoming drug mules (O'Hagan & Harvey, 2016:08). Nicolene Kruger, from Germiston, is an excellent example of this; she admitted that she was a drug addict and agreed to be a drug mule to make money to support her drug habit. She was arrested in Thailand in 2011 and sentenced to 33 years in prison (Friedman, 2012: np). In this case, she was the victim of her circumstances because of her drug addiction. Due to her drug addiction, she was obligated to settle her drug-debt by becoming a drug mule. Doreen, another woman, interviewed by Friedman (2012:np), admitted to being a drug addict, who was introduced to drugs by her partner who in turn introduced her to Veronica, her handler, which ultimately recruited her as a drug mule to pay off her drug-debt. When it comes to drug abuse, it becomes a bit more convoluted to try and simplify the motivation associated with drug dependency. For some people, drug addiction leading to bad decisions may be seen as a rational lifestyle choice, while for some, it could be seen as self-inflicted. For some scholars, though, debates about addiction and dependency may be rationalised (Zampini, 2018:4-5).

Fleetwood, Radcliffe, and Stevens (2015:428) surmise that people who carry drugs as mules are recruited and employed by someone else, whereas self-employed mules work independently. The EMCDDA (2012:np) has also, through various studies, identified different drug mule typologies which are distinguishable by certain elements such as motive, hierarchical standing and technologies. The distinction between self-employed drug mules and those who are recruited is essential and was discussed in detail in chapter 2. The importance is based on the fact that self-employed mules seem to possess a sense of agency and independence over their decisions to transport drugs, thus likely influencing their motives (Fleetwood, 2014:164). Despite this, O'Hagan and Harvey (2016:8) claim that there is seldom a middle ground; being employed as a drug mule will result in the mule either being in an underpaid low-level position, or a lucrative position. Bjerk and Mason (2014:2) concur that drug mule research proves that the market for drug mules is flexible and adequately developed. The disparity between being a low or high-level mule (self-employed) is based on various factors such as the amount of drugs smuggled, the level of danger and the position of the mule within the drug organisation (O'Hagan & Harvey, 2016:8). Despite this, Weber (2019:1768) opined that if one had to take into account the quantities the

mules carry, versus the flat fee they are usually paid, the result is that low-level drug mules and couriers are paid far less than what their actual services are worth.

Campbell (2008:250) cites female empowerment and adventure as reasons for choosing to be involved in drug smuggling, further confirming that it was economic and cultural factors that shaped women's involvement in drug smuggling and subsequently the effects thereof on their lives. The effects were found to vary significantly and were mainly determined by a woman's social class and their ranking in the drug organisation. Campbell (2008:243-244) concludes that high-level female drug smugglers may be attracted to the power and mystique of drug trafficking and may achieve relative independence from male dominance; while middle-level women in smuggling organisations obtain less freedom regarding men but sometimes manipulate gender stereotypes to their advantage in the smuggling world. Lastly, low-level mules challenge traditional gender roles as a smuggling strategy (to avoid detection), yet they still receive the lesser economic benefit and lesser power, though in some cases some may gain independence from male domestic control.

Lai (2012:9) maintains that self-employed mules organise the importation and sale of the drugs personally, while drug mules work on a fee-for-service basis. *Locked Up* (2012:np) claims that drug mules can make up to R 70 000 on a successful trip, and consequently such rewards can make it easier for unemployed people to be recruited (Van Heerden and Minnnaar, 2016:23). O'Hagan and Harvey (2016:8) postulate that self-identity and image - linked to how individuals see themselves and measure their self-worth - is intrinsically linked to the allure of accumulating wealth and attaining a certain level of respect. Van Heerden and Minnar (2016:24) also note that for some women drug smuggling is a way of life and being a drug mule serves to maintain a need in their lives, in this case through delinquent means. Nevertheless, EMCDDA (2012:19) aver that there is some disagreement regarding just how complicit drug mules are because they are often portrayed by the media and law enforcement as unwilling and unwitting participants, yet levels of coercion are not well defined or outlined in the discourse about culpability.

The literature exploration of factors that could motivate women to become drug mules highlights the complexity of this phenomena. It also emphasises the danger of

generalising motives and oversimplifying based on gender stereotypes. It is averred that the findings from this study will contribute to understanding what motivates South African women to become drug mules.

### **3.4 CRIMINOLOGICAL THEORY**

Because people are complex, the choices they make to become drug mules vary; therefore multiple criminological theories have been used to explain the different social, personal, and environmental factors of women who are susceptible to drug mule recruitment, and women who partake in the drug business. Based on the above distinction, it can be implied that motivations for becoming a drug mule differ. For this research, Walter Reckless' Containment Theory, the Neutralization Theory, the Social Identity Theory, the Rational Choice Theory, and the Lifestyle and Routine Activities Theory will be outlined to analyse female motives for becoming drug mules.

#### **3.4.1 Walter Reckless' Containment Theory**

The Containment Theory is a control theory which postulates that people operate on two opposite forces in their lives, namely internal and external containments or "*push or pull*" forces (Lanier, Henry & Anastasia 2014:156). Flexon (2010:5) indicates that the Containment Theory is one version of the various control theories, which are theories that rationalise that in the absence of strong social systems, deviancy will flourish. Walter Reckless' Containment Theory was an addition to the works of Albert J. Reiss. The psychological forces - or what is referred to as 'pushes' - can be the elements that drive an individual towards crime and deviance. The pull factors - which are the external pressures as mentioned above – form part of the main influences that can remove an individual from acceptable social norms. The Containment Theory maintains that individuals are all put through 'push and pulls' in life, i.e. factors that either push or pull an individual towards offending (Akers, 2013:82).

It is argued that both internal and external containment help prevent deviancy in society. Internal containment denotes an individual's propensity to self-regulate and steer themselves towards socially acceptable goals. External containment refers to the collective ability of the state, community, family, church and other influential groups to maintain order and keep an individual's behaviour within the standard rules, values

and norms and is regarded as the second line of defence. Consequently, Damm and Dustmann (2014:6) found that people who are repeatedly exposed to crime and deviancy end up learning that deviant behaviour is acceptable and will likely be pulled into a life of crime. Nonetheless, Cardwell (2013:11) claims the following exception made by Walter Reckless; “...*only a minority of individuals, no matter to what internal or external pushes and pulls they may be subject, get involved in crime and delinquency*”.

The main question asked in the Containment Theory is how some individuals avoid being deviant in society while others do not (Flexon, 2010:5). An example of a pull with regards to drug mules is when an individual who is financially struggling sees that another individual is making ‘easy money’, and living what is seemingly an attractive lifestyle as a mule, and decides to be a mule in order to achieve financial freedom. Unlu and Ekici (2012:299) note that drug mules take a risk for a small return as they see being a drug mule as an effortless way to make money. Therefore, an individual can be pulled into being a drug mule by the attraction of the ‘good life’ and making what outwardly seems like fast, easy money. A notable example of a pull effect is the story of Melina Roberge and Isabelle Lagace infamously arrested in 2016 in Sydney, Australia for smuggling drugs aboard a cruise ship. Melina told the court that she was seduced by the glamorous lifestyle she wanted to enjoy and by taking selfies ‘in exotic locations’ to post on Instagram to receive ‘likes’ and attention’, while Isabelle claimed she took part to settle a \$17 000 debt (Associated Press, 2018:np).

Rasheed, Abdullateef, Ganiyu, and Abdulbaqi (2016:30) explain push factors that can explain crime are factors such as low status, poverty, unemployment, deviant family, companions, limited opportunities, family conflicts, and physical and psychological forces that affect behaviour, for example, unhappiness, mental conflicts, anxieties and the need for immediate gratification. An example of this is the story of Lorraine Benjamin, from Mitchell’s Plain, who chose to become a mule as she was unemployed, in order to support her three children with the hope of building them a house from the proceeds of being a drug mule (Serra, 2016:np). In the above example, Lorraine’s push factors could be the fact that she was desperate and unemployed with three children to take care of who depended on her.

The Containment Theory maintains that pull factors are the elements that draw a person away from their core values or original way of accepted living; they can be elements such as criminal subculture, media influences, and/or delinquent associations to name a few (Akers, 2013:82-83).

The overall essence of the Containment Theory is that if people cannot contain themselves, then their family, friends and perhaps peers may try to contain them, failing which, other social or informal institutions such as schools, churches, and communities may provide containment. If all the examples mentioned above fail, then the criminal justice system may contain a person through arrest and incarceration (Looman & Carl, 2015:57).

While this is a useful theory towards explaining crime, it is equally limiting as it neglects the definition of crime in diverse cultures or a personal sense of agency. Furthermore, the Containment Theory does not fully explain the contradiction of its principles such as people with strong moral foundations who commit a crime, and similarly people with weak foundations who do not break the law. Lux (2014:4) supports the above criticism by questioning the implication that the Containment Theory makes, which is that people who have a positive self-concept do not break the law.

### **3.4.2 Neutralization Theory**

The Neutralization Theory is a social learning theory which argues that crime is learned through cultural values and acquaintances (Siegel, 2011:137). This Theory, advanced by Gresham Sykes and David Matza in 1957, is built on the premise that people drift between lawful and unlawful behaviour even though they understand that unlawful behaviour is wrong (Siegel, 2011:177). The theory posits that people are not completely good, nor are they completely bad. The main idea is that people drift between good behaviour and bad behaviour. For instance, we have all at one point done something that went against our value system, or something unlawful, but that still does not make us immoral people. People use excuses and explanations to justify their deviancy (Kaptein & van Helvoort, 2019:1). This theory developed according to four observations of juvenile delinquent behaviour, wherein the following were noted:

1. Juvenile delinquents often experienced guilt or shame after committing a crime.

2. The juvenile delinquents seemed to respect and show some admiration towards law-abiding people, thus showing that they were cognisant of lawful societal norms.
3. Certain groups will neither be victimised or harmed such as friends, family, and relatives signifying a sort of value structure within their particular group.
4. It is not likely that offenders are exempt from established societal influences - that said, people still generally accept and agree with law-abiding behaviour (Kaptein & van Helvoort, 2018:2).

As noted by Copes and Deitzer (2015:1), it is because of the above observations that Sykes and Matza came up with five techniques of neutralisation, that is, means that justify peoples' actions and shift blame from themselves for why they broke the law. These techniques of neutralisation include denial of responsibility, denial of injury, denial of the victim, condemnation of the condemners and appeal to higher loyalties.

Denial of responsibility suggests that a person will acknowledge their wrongdoing but not take responsibility for their actions and instead justify and assign blame to other factors rather than themselves for committing the crime. For example, a person could claim that they had no choice; they were following orders or were forced to do what they did. An example is when it comes to being sentenced for their crimes - some drug mules will justify their actions by telling the courts that they were forced into being drug mules, were threatened and thus they had no choice, or they grew up in miserable homes, they grew up poor, or they cite unemployment and/or poverty (Fleetwood, 2015c:1). These justifications even if true, still show a lack of responsibility for their actions.

Siegel and Walsh (2014:159) declare that denial of injury implies that although the crime was committed, or the law is broken, nobody was hurt, or no permanent damage was done, so the crime should not be an issue as there was no victim. For instance, if a person is caught speeding, they try and justify why they should not be fined or jailed as they did not cause an accident so in essence 'what is the big deal?'. Similarly, a drug mule caught with drugs may claim that the drugs never reached the intended destination ergo 'no harm, no foul.' Some mules may see their crime as victimless in that they are merely delivering a package and not harming anyone. In countries where



the legislation against drug mules is lenient, this type of justification can work to the advantage of the mule, however, in other countries, it would not as drug crimes of any sort are regarded as serious crimes.

Denial of the victim means that the perpetrator often blames the victim(s) for their action. Perpetrators may see their crime as a form of retribution for the victims' action (Kaptein & van Helvoort, 2019:15). This is exemplified in the recent spate of looting and violence towards foreign shop owners in Soweto. Shange (2018:np) reports that some people arrested for beating up shop owners and stealing their merchandise claimed that the shop owners sold expired goods which were harmful to their health and took away jobs from South Africans – which somehow seemed to justify the crime. In the case of drug mules, the victims could be border patrol agents, the state, and any law enforcement official. A drug mule could easily claim that the officials at the airport or the police are inept and because of their ineptitude, they made it easy to enter a particular country with drugs (Van Heerden & Minnaar, 2016:8).

Kaptein and van Helvoort (2019:10) suggest that condemning the condemner is another way that perpetrators relinquish the responsibility of their actions, and they do this by shifting blame for their actions to those who view the perpetrator's behaviour as wrong. An example of this is where teachers practice corporal punishment in their classrooms, although it is against the law (Seale, 2017:1). When these teachers are reported or caught they lament the fact that students misbehave because they lack discipline, blaming the students' parents for not instilling better values and discipline, making statements such as "*Learners now know they can do whatever they want because no teacher has a right to dare touch them,*" (Seale, 2017:1). Condemning the condemner sometimes occurs in the case of mules where they will not take responsibility for their actions and instead shift blame towards the police, for example, calling them corrupt and untrustworthy (Sikorska, 2016:141).

Appealing to a higher loyalty as per Siegel and Walsh (2014:159) is basically where a perpetrator accepts that what they did was wrong but still justifies their wrongdoing. For example, justifying the action by stating that they were committing the crime in order to get money to feed their families, or that they are the sole breadwinners in their family so everybody is relying on them and the government is not providing jobs or

enough social grant allowances. Weber (2019:1770) makes a similar inference in his research aptly titled '*The courier conundrum*' alluding to the fact that some women are trapped in a "...*vicious cycle of necessity and desperation*..." whereby being a drug mule may appear to some to be the only way to make ends meet. Part one, of a two-part series for the *Daily Voice*, featured Lorraine Benjamin, a convicted drug mule, who categorically stated that she put her body on the line by being a swallower drug mule in order to give her children a better life (Serra, 2016:np). This is an apt example of the 'appealing to a higher loyalty' motivation.

Briefly, the Neutralization Theory's overarching statement is that people will nullify or neutralise established norms and values by making excuses that make it easier for them to drift into crime (Siegel, 2011:178). The offenders could make these excuses themselves or through family members who try and rationalise illegal behaviour. An example is Kathlyn Dunn, who was arrested in Indonesia in 2012 for carrying R 4,6 million worth of drugs. Her family was cited saying "...*she lost her way in life...she has been used as bait in a foreign country...we believe she was under the influence and was used as a decoy...she got involved with the wrong crowd.*" (Pillay & Medley, 2012: np). This underscores that even though the techniques of neutralisation cannot fully explain drug mule motives, they do show some methods that drug mules use in order to motivate and justify why they are drug mules - in essence rationalising the illegality of their behaviour. This Theory clarifies how some drug mules see themselves as victims. Moreover, Kaptein and Helvoort (2019:3) opine that techniques of neutralisation can be used before a crime is committed, while considering the crime, during the commission of a crime and after a crime is committed.

Due to the thin line between reality and perception, it is perceivable that drug mules would use the techniques of neutralisation to justify their behaviour and consequently shed some light on the reasons of their actions, perceptions and ultimately motivations.

### **3.4.3 Social Identity Theory**

The role of identity is often overlooked but may be an essential component of criminality. The Social Identity Theory was developed in 1979 by Tajfel and Turner as a psychological theory dealing with relationships, conflict, and cooperation within

groups (McKeown, Haji & Ferguson, 2016:3). It is a theory that proposes that individuals will attempt to raise their self-esteem through achievement and success, or by associating themselves with successful company. It attempts to explain how belonging to a group may influence individual behaviour and thought processes. The Theory is similar to Walter Reckless' Containment Theory in that it emphasises that individual behaviour is linked to relations within certain social groups and that different social settings may cause some people to think, feel and act in a way that fits the patterns of their current group or identity in that group.

There are two fundamental aspects of the Social Identity Theory, which are an individual's self-identity and their collective identity. Abrams and Hogg (2010:180-181) outlined four fundamental processes involved in Social Identity Theory, namely; self-categorisation, social identity, social comparison, and positive distinction. McKeown et al. (2016:7) state that social categorisation is the inclination of people to divide themselves and categorise others into 'in-groups' and 'out-groups.' Van Dick and Kerschreiter (2016:364) state that self-categorisation enhances as well as exaggerates the differences between the 'in-group' and the 'out-group.' For example, in a case of two groups of women who live in the same neighbourhood, the 'in-group' would be the group that is outwardly popular, attractive, drive beautiful cars, wear expensive clothes, live exciting lives, and have a large social media following for example; while the 'out-group' would be those that would be labelled as dull and boring in order to enable the 'in-group' to categorise them. For example, in the case of drug mules, the categorisation is seen in how mules are classified, namely as couriers or drug mules. The couriers would be considered the in-group as they are self-employed - implying that there is a higher level of engagement between them and the drug dealers - whereas drug mules are considered low level and have minimal agency regarding what they carry, the size thereof and remuneration (Van Dick & Kerschreiter, 2016:364). Drug mules are instructed, whereas couriers are engaged during the planning process.

According to Trepte and Loy (2017:4), social identity is formed through self-categorisation, and refers to the predisposition of individuals to adopt an identity in line with an individual's 'in groups' - in other words, their identity is built on several social and personal identities instead of the personal self. Ben-Ner, McCall, Stephane, and

Wang (2009:154-155) found that people tend to act favourably to those who share similar attributes to them. An example of this can be found in schools, workplaces or social settings where people tend to gravitate towards people who are like-minded or more accessible, outgoing, successful, and so forth; rather than people whom they perceive to be living tedious, unexciting lives. A point in case is Participant 2's life story discussed below. She outright stated that the people that she met while pursuing her life of crime, both excited and motivated her to want to move up in the criminal world.

The third process is social comparison and positive distinctiveness which is the aspect of the Theory that communicates how individuals try to recognise traits that make out-groups inferior to their in-group (Abrams & Hogg, 2010:180). Individuals use self-analysis to compare themselves to the 'in' or 'out' group in an attempt to boost their self-esteem and confidently establish some superiority over others; in turn, raising their social identity. By way of illustration, in a group, rich women might have an advantage over those who are not, subsequently making it easier for rich women to establish themselves as being better and superior. If an individual belonged to such a group, it can be argued that they could easily be influenced to be a drug mule in order to make 'easy fast money' so that they could be on an equal financial footing to the in-group. This is demonstrated in the case of Melina Roberge, who admitted that she wanted to be the envy of her peers by looking like she lived an exciting, flashy lifestyle by posting photos from different exotic locations on Instagram (McGuirk, 2018:np).

McKeown et al. (2016:168) claim that according to the Social Identity Theory, human motives and actions are formed by how people justify the situations they find themselves in. An example of this is how people justify being a drug mule as a means out of poverty because their neighbour or family member managed to live well being a mule. Their motives could be perpetuated by the fact that their neighbour or family member appears to be living well while working as a drug mule.

The Social Identity Theory provides essential insights into understanding why some people choose to be drug mules. People who chose to become drug mules may do so to make money or achieve 'wealth' in a speedy manner by choosing illegal ways which are considerably faster than legitimate opportunities. By choosing this path, they are effectively separating themselves from the 'deprived' group to join a new group of

quick money and faster material wealth. These individuals are willing to take the risk of potential apprehension rather than continuing to work in jobs that do not pay what drug mules earn. For instance, Singh (2011:np) declares that drug mules can earn up to R 70 000 per trip. Likewise, according to Ulun and Ekici (2012:301), a mule can earn between \$2 000 (R 26 229,60) and \$5 000 (R65 574) - ergo, an individuals' motivations may be based on monetary success despite the legal implications. However, Ulun and Ekici (2012:301) state that the rates are not fixed and are determined by various factors such as weight, distance, type of substance, and so forth. Once they are rewarded for being a drug mule, these individuals can now classify themselves as part of a group with a prominent social and monetary status, thus relegating their acquaintances to the 'out' group. Social identity formation and self-categorisation produce different results. As sophisticated individuals' humans have different triggers and motivations for making the decisions they make. Some decisions are based on social identity or how a person views themselves in relation to their social environment or self-categorization, and how they categorise themselves, for example as a person who has agency or as a victim of circumstances (Trepte and Loy, 2017:1).

Like the Anomie Theory that refers to strain and pressure; the Social Identity Theory further emphasises that strain and pressure from different life facets play a significant role in the decisions people make. With the rise of super-wealthy individuals and the glamorisation of individuals enriched from ill-gotten gains, today's society is influenced by appearances, fame and fortune where conspicuous consumption and immediate gratification are essential; thus material possessions become status symbols, and people do whatever it takes to achieve/attain them (Zheng, Baskin & Peng, 2018:197). The 'whatever it takes' motive can include people becoming drug mules in order to achieve material wealth speedily, and can be linked to people who are coerced because they must pay back the debt of a loved one, as was the case of Annabel Momplé, the Durban school teacher arrested for smuggling drugs to help her gambling addict husband settle his massive debt (Griffiths, 2012:np). Many examples are linked to the 'whatever it takes' motive, but it is ultimately linked to social identity. With regard to criminality and theory, various theories can be used to explain why people commit a crime. The interviews conducted for this research will help to shed some more light on drug mule motives and possibly contribute to, substantiate, or bring new angles to other criminological theories.

#### **3.4.4 Rational Choice Theory**

Another theory that can be used to explain the behaviour of drug mules is the Rational Choice Theory. This Theory was initially established by the Classical School of Criminology (Burke, 2014:44). The Theory was initially used as a way to try and explain human behaviour. The general essence of the Theory is that people will commit a crime when an opportunity presents itself - simply put people will weigh the costs and benefits of crime and in so doing, make a rational choice about whether to commit the crime or not (Siegel, 2011:85). According to McCarthy and Chaudhary (2014:3), the Theory posits the following: people have preferences for outcomes, preferences which are influenced by the expected benefits vis-à-vis the costs. These possible benefits may include monetary, emotional, and social benefits which are assessed against the cost of attaining them, thus being the primary indicator of the overall effectiveness.

In the context of female drug mules, an example of the Theory would be a person who works twelve hours a day for a minimum wage, weighing the cost of being a drug mule versus what they stand to benefit from being a drug mule. In other words, a person may decide that being paid R 15 000 for one trip working as a drug mule is a far better option than working for R 3 500 a month. The decision to become a drug mule using the Rational Choice Theory would be guided by how much money a perpetrator could earn as a drug mule, versus the possibilities of being apprehended. Oliver (2015:6) supports this assertion by stating that once drug smugglers have adapted to the lifestyle of making easy money the need to maintain their avaricious lifestyle may be their primary motivation; thus a rational choice is made to continue with the criminal activity. If the person decides that the likelihood of making more money far outweighs the likelihood of being apprehended, then they would choose to be a drug mule as part of their cost versus benefit analysis. In addition, another decision drug mule's make pertains to the method used to smuggle the drugs. Oliver (2015:9) highlights that rational behaviour can also be seen in the method drug mules choose to transport drugs, and the coinciding risk of the method. For example, swallowing drug pellets has a more significant health risk than hiding the drugs in luggage. In other words, drug mules are purposefully intelligent in the way they choose to conceal drugs to assure the least risk for the highest gain. Such choices are made by using the information they have collected and have at their disposal (McCarthy & Chaudhary, 2014:3).

While the cost of being a drug mule may seem high if news reports of being sentenced to death are anything to go by, for some people the financial rewards far outweigh the potential costs of being apprehended. Drug traffickers are good at underplaying the risks and over-emphasizing the gains during the recruitment of drug mules as they capitalise on the dire circumstances of their recruits, thus using the information at hand to their advantage (Weber, 2019:1768). Sggolana (2018:1) maintains that corruption at some airports may be perceived as a factor that improves drug mules' chances of not being apprehended, which hence acts as a motivator when the risk versus benefit is reviewed. Oliver (2015:8) opines that all levels of drug smuggling may be classified as a risky occupation, thus highlighting the importance of making a rational choice when the risks versus benefits are determined.

Although criticised, this Theory remains valid and applies to this study to shed some light on motivating factors that may influence an individual's choice to become a drug mule or not. The one critique of the Theory mentioned by Hodgson (2012:101) is that it is too broad in that it can cover every conceivable decision regarding a person's choice, in other words, it can fit into everything yet explain very little. Another critique levelled against the Theory is that for example, sexual and violent crimes are rooted in biological instinct rather than rational choice (Idsø & Årethun, 2017:14).

Despite its shortcomings, Johnson, Guerette and Bowers (2014:566) propose that when it comes to Rational Choice Theory, even with a motivated offender, if the opportunity to offend is removed, the incidence of crime will be minimised. In other words, if a person is not presented with an 'easy' opportunity to commit a crime then they would not commit a crime - the Theory avers that ultimately it is about preferences and choices that people make (McCarthy and Chaudhary, 2014:1).

### **3.4.5 Lifestyle and Routine Activities Theory**

Pratt and Turanovic (2016:335) state that the Lifestyle Exposure Model was developed in 1978 by Hindelang, Gottfredson and Garofalo in order to categorise and explain lifestyles responsible for the victimisation of specific individuals. The Lifestyle and Routine Activities Theory are separate theories which are closely related because of

their similarity. Pratt and Turanovic (2016:336) point out that when it comes to the Lifestyle Theory, it is usually the individuals' lifestyle that makes people prone to being victimised based on their exposure to societal criminal elements. LRAT views risk in terms of probabilities. For example, it states that certain behaviours give rise to the risk of victimisation. In other words, individuals become crime victims because they do not exercise rational choice and/or intelligence in certain social situations. According to Pratt and Turanovic (2016:336), LRAT underscores that individuals are exposed to "...*high risk times, places and people*".

LRAT claims that victimisation is opportunistic, ergo, there has to be a combination of favourable factors at play in order for a person to be victimised (Daigle, 2012:3; Robinson & Cussen 2017:123). The Theory is founded on the work of Lawrence Cohen and Marcus Felson that related victimisation against the backdrop of a motivated offender, attractive target or victim, and the absence of capable guardianship (Pratt & Turanovic, 2016:335). In the case of drug mules, a motivated offender can be the drug trafficker whose sole aim is to smuggle drugs from one destination to another, a readily available victim may be the unsuspecting individual who is unaware that they are being groomed to be recruited as a drug mule; and the final condition is the absence of capable guardians would apply to individuals who do not have close bonds with their family members to warn them against getting involved with a drug trafficker.

LRAT is a fitting theory that may explain why people become drug mules. This is based on the premise that some women are taken advantage of and exploited, thus forcing them to become drug mules (Gerry, Harré, Naibaho, Muraszkievicz & Boister, 2018:167). Another example can be found in victims of human trafficking who are forced to become drug mules or those individuals who are tricked into carrying drugs unknowingly (Gerry et al., 2018:180). These include unsuspecting people duped by family members, acquaintances, friends, or intimate partners into transporting drugs without their knowledge.

Like all theory, the LRAT has a few shortcomings; the main criticism is that it seems to place blame on the victim (Miró, 2014:6). In addition, Sovacool and Hess (2017:728) postulate that because the Theory focuses on the merits of an individual's lifestyle, it



may blame individuals who are deemed to have inappropriate, unhealthy, or unsustainable lifestyles.

Criminological theory is an important measure when it comes to explaining crime. Although criminological theories are usually not a 'one size fits all' approach, they still enable criminologists to try and make sense of certain crime phenomena.

### **3.5 CHAPTER CONCLUSION**

Doorewaard (2016:34) claims that because women are often seen as nurturers, they are perceived to be incapable of committing indescribable crimes and most often they are viewed as trapped due to circumstances and forced into a life of crime. As shown above, various reasons motivate females to become drug mules; nevertheless, it is clear that victimisation, exploitation, coercion, trickery, free will and money are the most frequently recurring reasons. Prominent previous studies exploring and evaluating the motives of female drug mules consulted for this research revealed different results. Fleetwood (2014:15) maintains that female accounts of being drug mules involved poverty, money, mothering, and relationships; stating that other themes emerged which comprised of escape, opportunity, and excitement.

Despite the different results, there was still an underlying similarity in the results of the studies examined for this research, in that the majority of the women were victims to varying degrees, such as victims of circumstances, naiveté, drug abuse or simply greed.

Fleetwood (2014:161) found that a growing number of women play an increasingly important role in organised drug-smuggling operations through their family networks and that instead of being coerced or victimised, females viewed being drug mules as a reasonable career option in the context of their active social networks. While on the other hand, Bailey (2013:121,135) admitted that drug smuggling research claims that the motives for many women were a product of various forms of victimisation ranging from poverty to emotional dependence on romantic partners, with a minimal number of women displaying a sense of agency with motives usually associated with men.

Schemenauer (2012:86) offers a different view, in that when it comes to drug mules, female mules are often dismissed as instruments in the drug trade thereby only being described in terms of victims and vamps - a product of the 'Madonna/whore' dichotomy - which in itself is untrue as it normalises gender protection. Bareket, Kahalon, Shnabel and Glick (2018:np) describe the 'Madonna/whore' dichotomy as the contrasting perceptions of women as either 'good' or innocent as the Madonnas - or 'bad', licentious, or immoral as whores. Therefore, the Madonna drug mule would be considered an innocent victim of circumstance. Due to the complexity of humans and everyday life, it can be concluded that not all decisions made by humans are straightforward. Nevertheless, EMCDDA (2012:19) avers that there is some disagreement regarding just how complicit drug mules are in their crimes as they are often portrayed by the media and law enforcement as unwilling, unwitting participants - yet levels of coercion are not well defined or outlined. With all being said, it is essential to remember that motives are often not one-dimensional, but rather multi-dimensional according to an individual's perception. Although available literature covers a wide variety of theories, Burt and Simons (2013:1330) note that most crime theories are focused mainly on the material benefits of crime, where other non-economic motivations such as status, respect, and self-esteem gained from the completion of the crime, are overlooked. This is highlighted by Collins (2018:1) who claims that some women are purely motivated by money and notoriety and thus take part in criminal activities in order to obtain money to fulfil what are legitimate needs to them.

Given the different motivations that have been mentioned thus far, it should be cautioned that the literature reviewed was limited to women who smuggled drugs in a few countries globally. Overall, the above analyses, consistent with the literature studied, provides some valuable information regarding female motivations for becoming drug mules. Regardless of the various explanations, Fleetwood (2015b: 964) outlines the fact that motivations for being a drug mule are complex and should be explored in more depth. Despite the value of the information, explanations and motivations of female offending are still lacking. It is clear that South African female motivations for becoming drug mules have received minimal attention, and as such, this research will endeavour to provide more insight and expand on female motivations for becoming drug mules. This research will assist in filling the gap in the current

research by providing a study that deals exclusively with female drug mule motives. Whatever the reasons, however, a person's motivations are often more complicated than what research implies.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

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#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

As mentioned, the study aims to explore the motives of female offenders for becoming drug mules. To achieve this aim, the research methodology of the study should be explained to substantiate the scientific rigour of the study. The purpose of this chapter is to outline and clarify the logic behind the chosen methods and techniques used by the researcher. The chapter includes an in-depth discussion of the research design, sampling procedure, data collection and analysis strategy followed. Because the study dealt with a vulnerable group, namely female drug mules, the emphasis is placed on ethical considerations guiding the study.

#### **4.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN**

The study followed a qualitative exploratory methodology making use of case study design. A qualitative approach is deemed best when the researcher wants to explore a subject about which little information is available and when the researcher wants to understand the meanings, motives or reasons of the phenomenon in question (Fouché & Schurink 2011:308; Patten & Newhart, 2018:173). Qualitative research provides a detailed description regarding human behaviour, exploring reasons and questions of why and how individuals behave the way they do (Merriam & Grenier, 2019:6). As mentioned, limited research is available in South Africa on the motives of women involved in the drug trade as drug mules. Hence, in the interest of conducting rich and informative research, a qualitative approach was followed. The qualitative researcher is furthermore focused on understanding information rather than the justification or measurement thereof (Fouché & Schurink, 2011:308). A case study design was thus used. For the study, a collective case study design was used in order to draw a comparison between cases with regards to the motives of women who became drug mules (De Vos et al., 2011:322).

The purpose of a case study is to give meaning to the participants' life experiences by immersing oneself therein and thereby becoming familiar with their social world (Fouché & Schurink, 2011:320). Patten and Newhart (2018:174) underscore the fact that case studies are distinguished from other qualitative methods mainly by how a case study focuses on a single case or a small number of cases, as is the case in this study.

As mentioned, Dastile (2013:5298) commented on the lack of opportunities for female offenders to tell their own stories. Hence, the case study design was ideal for this particular topic as it allowed participants to tell their own life stories, and thereby an opportunity to explain how and why they became drug mules. It furthermore acknowledged the complex nature of human beings and the differences in what drives and/or motivates them. Case studies were, therefore, an ideal design for understanding the complexities associated with drug muling.

The study was furthermore exploratory. Exploratory research is frequently used in qualitative studies and generally used when limited information is available about a research topic (De Vos et al., 2011:95). Exploratory research served to obtain a fuller picture of participant beliefs, observations, and explanations of their experiences as drug mules.

Exploratory qualitative research generally has a fundamental research goal (De Vos et al., 2011:96). The purpose of basic research is to provide “...a *foundation for knowledge and understanding*” (De Vos et al., 2011:95). As such, this study aims to produce new knowledge by researching an under-researched topic.

#### **4.3 SAMPLE STRATEGY FOR THE STUDY**

Ritchie and Lewis (2013:77-78) state that there are various types of sampling strategies in qualitative research and a distinction is made between probability and non-probability samples. Probability sampling is randomised, while non-probability sampling is not (De Vos et al., 2011:226). Qualitative research predominantly uses non-probability sampling, which means that sampling units are intentionally chosen to reflect group components within the examined populace. Hence, non-probability

sampling was used for this study since the unit of analysis comprised of a specific unit of analysis.

The unit of analysis for the study consisted of women who previously acted as drug mules and who are based in Gauteng. De Vos et al. (2011:93) define units of analysis as “...*people or things whose characteristics social researchers observe, describe and explain.*” Units of analysis can also be referred to as the population of a study group about whom researchers make inferences (Babbie, 2010:116).

According to Ritchie and Lewis (2013:82-85), three features are essential in qualitative sampling, namely clear prescribed criteria to define the sample population, adequate sample size and a sound sampling strategy to draw the sample. In this regard, Ritchie and Lewis, (2013:82) postulate that it is acceptable to increase the sample size by adding other participants, or by obtaining a second sample within the scope of the same study.

Purposeful sampling was used to draw an initial sample. Purposive sampling, also known as judgmental sampling (Patten & Newhart, 2018:100), is dependent on the researcher's judgement in so far as the sample is composed of participants whose characteristics are representative or typical of the research population under study (De Vos et al., 2011:392). Simply put, it is utilised by researchers when selecting individuals whom they believe would be most suitable for the study. (Patten & Newhart, 2018:100). The researcher approached five female drug mules who are known to her, who after being informed about the study agreed to participate. Snowball sampling was used thereafter as a means of identifying and recruiting additional research participants. This sampling strategy is often used to find and recruit populations who are not easy to identify or accessible to researchers (Babbie, 2010:193, Patten & Newhart, 2018:102). In order to protect the privacy of participants, the researcher asked the participants who agreed to participate in the study to contact other potential participants and inform them about the study, and to ask them if they would be interested in participating. The identities of these potential participants, therefore only become known to the researcher after they had consented to their personal information being shared with the researcher and after indicating their interest in participating in the study.

The research sample consisted of seven women who have been previously arrested for drug muling. Fifteen (15) women were initially approached to take part in the study. Out of the 15, two outright declined to participate, while six were hesitant and doubtful. The women who declined or expressed doubt were automatically excluded as voluntary participation was a prerequisite for the study. Ideally, the researcher set out to interview at least 10 participants, but in the end, only seven women agreed to participate. Recruiting drug mules who are willing to speak about their experiences is not easy due to the clandestine nature of their activities. The small sample was, therefore, also earmarked as a limitation to this study. Nonetheless, the small sample size did not have a significant impact on the study since the research design for the study is qualitative and exploratory, which implies that the purpose of the study is not to produce generalisable findings but rather, as is typical in studies following a case study design, to collect data from a small number of participants in order to give meaning to their life experiences (De Vos et al., 2011:320).

Qualitative samples are usually small because the sort of data and information that qualitative studies yield, is rich in detail (De Vos et al., 2011:391). Data saturation is generally used as the yardstick for determining sample size in qualitative research. As such Saunders, Sim, Kingstone, Baker, Wakefield, Bartlam, Burroughs and Jinks (2018:1895) warn that it is crucial to clearly define what saturation implies within the context of a study.

For this study, an inductive thematic saturation model was followed, which implied that data was collected and analysed until themes repeated, and no new themes emerged (Saunders et al., 2018:1900).

#### **4.4 DATA COLLECTION**

Ritchie and Lewis (2013:3) identify various ways in which data can be collected in qualitative research. These include observation, in-depth interviewing, group discussions, narratives, and analysis of documentary evidence. Data for this research was collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews over three months. Semi-structured interviews are one-on-one interviews that allow for follow up questions and further probing, hence offering flexibility to undertake an in-depth exploration of the

research topic (Flick, 2018:233). An interview schedule was used, allowing the researcher to ask open-ended questions for further probing. This method of data collection was appropriate for the study since it permitted the collection of high-quality, in-depth data from participant perspectives.

Informed consent was obtained from participants verbally and in writing before commencing with data collection. Interviews lasted between one hour fifteen minutes to three and a half hours to allow participants adequate time to tell their life stories. The interviews were initially conducted in English, but some participants reverted to the use of their mother tongues, so some interviews ended up being conducted in isiZulu and Setswana, both being languages with which the researcher is au fait. All interviews were recorded with the permission of the participants. In addition, field notes were used to capture and highlight pertinent points and information that called for further probing and discussion.

#### **4.5 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

Qualitative data analysis is the non-numerical investigation and description of observations to find hidden meanings and patterns of relationship and is the fifth phase in the research process (De Vos et al., 2011:399). Taylor, DeVault and Bogden (2016:168) add that qualitative data analysis is not a technical process but rather an inductive reasoning and thinking process. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the collected data. Patten and Newhart (2018:175) underscore that when undertaking multiple case study research, data analysis begins by taking into consideration case data from a single person first. Braun and Clarke (2013:3) define thematic analysis as a method for classifying and analysing patterns in qualitative data. The thematic analysis comprises of analysing texts from the interviews, identifying themes within those interviews and bringing together patterns or themes from the text. The various themes were assigned a code, then separated and scrutinised in more detail (Patten & Newhart, 2018:168). Braun and Clarke (2013:4) identify six phases in a thematic analysis which are: becoming familiar with the data, generating codes searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and producing the report.



After completion of the interviews, an initial assessment of all the information collected was undertaken in order for the researcher to become familiar with the data, in preparation for data analysis. This included the transcription of the audio recorded data into text format (Flick, 2018:239).

The researcher transcribed the interviews and translated the different African languages and slang used during the interviews into English. Flick (2018:239) postulates that if interviews were done in a different language, the researcher must decide when the translation will happen. In this study, translation was undertaken after analysis of the data, as meaning and nuances in vernacular may have a completely different meaning when translated verbatim into English or another language.

To ensure anonymity and protect the confidentiality of participants, pseudonyms were used to identify participants; thus, no identifying information was included in the transcribed interviews. Further, all transcription was undertaken personally by the researcher to protect the identity of the participants and ensure that more focus was put on listening to the responses while transcribing, thus starting the preliminary identification of themes. After the transcription and translation of the interviews, the data was studied to identify themes. This involved reading the transcribed text and making notes of similarities and differences in participant responses to questions. Repeated themes and patterns were categorised and coded. Codes were generated, which involved identifying what variables are needed in order to understand the issues in the research question (Vito, Tewksbury & Kunselman, 2014:214). After the issues were identified, themes and patterns were analysed in greater detail; the analysis of which is documented in the dissertation as the findings of the study.

#### **4.6 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF DATA**

Marvasti (2004:113) stipulates that validity means truth, to the extent which an interpretation precisely “...*represents the social phenomena to which it refers.*” In qualitative research, the validity and reliability of research are determined in terms of the study’s credibility or authenticity, and its transferability, dependability, and conformability. De Vos et al. (2011:419) suggest four components that they believe accurately reflect the standard of qualitative research, and these components relate

to the establishment of trustworthiness, indicating credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability.

#### **4.6.1 Trustworthiness**

Baxter and Jack (2008:556) outline five essential elements that help to ensure trustworthiness in research that follows a case study design, namely: the research question should be clearly written; it must be ensured that the case study design is appropriate with regards to the research question; purposeful sampling strategies should be used; data should be collected and managed strategically and analysed correctly. All these tenets were applied in the research, as explained in the methodology above.

#### **4.6.2 Credibility**

Credibility is achieved in qualitative studies when participant perspectives are clearly and accurately presented. According to De Vos et al. (2011:420), an in-depth description of the complexities and interactions of variables embedded in the collected data will ensure that findings are valid. In this study, the rich narrative description of participant experiences contributed to the validity of the research findings.

#### **4.6.3 Transferability**

Transferability refers to applicability or generalisability of data, which is the extent to which the research can be transferred to other settings (De Vos et al., 2011:420). The study was exploratory; therefore, the intention was not to generalise findings but to add knowledge to an under-researched field thereby opening it up for further research.

#### **4.6.4 Dependability**

Dependability refers to reliability and consistency, which warrants that the research findings are reliable and can be repeated; and asks if the research process is “...logical, well documented and audited” (De Vos et al., 2011:420). An in-depth explanation of the research methodology followed in the study is included in this dissertation to substantiate the scientific rigour of the study.

#### **4.6.5 Conformability**

Conformability asks if the findings of the study can be confirmed by other sources (De Vos et al., 2011:421). In this regard, verbatim (and unedited) quotes from participant

narratives were included to substantiate findings presented in the study. The researcher, therefore, provides evidence to corroborate findings.

#### **4.7 RESEARCH ETHICS**

Nortjé, Visagie and Wessels (2019:230) state that over the past 30 years there has been a paradigm shift concerning research ethics codes in social sciences research, specially developed to inform the ethical conduct of researchers. The first step in ensuring the ethicality of this study was to obtain ethical clearance. Due to the inherent risks associated with collecting data from a vulnerable research population, ethical clearance was obtained from the Unisa CAES Health Research Ethics Committee which is registered with the National Health Research Ethics Council of South Africa. Ethical clearance was granted on the 10<sup>th</sup> of September 2018 (see Appendix A). The Unisa CAES Health Research Ethics Committee proposed that the research supervisor, Professor M Schoeman, should attend a pilot interview to review the researcher's ability to conduct the interviews. After attending the interview on the 28<sup>th</sup> of September 2018, a report was provided to the Unisa CAES Health Research Ethics Committee in which Professor Schoeman attested to the researcher's competence to conduct further interviews (see Appendix B).

The Criminological and Victimological Society of Southern Africa's code of conduct compels criminologists to observe the highest possible ethical and methodological standards and to conduct criminological research honestly. De Vos et al. (2011:115-126), and Rice (2008:1328) highlight ethical principles that should be adhered to when conducting research. These principles will henceforth be discussed.

##### **- *Informed Consent***

Before any research can begin, informed consent is required from the participants. This may be verbal or written (Flick, 2018:238) All the participants in this research completed an informed consent form that outlined the terms and basis for this research before the commencement of the study (see Appendix D). The voluntary nature of participation and the right to withdraw from the study were stipulated in the consent form. Added to this, consent was obtained verbally via voice recording undertaken before the interviews. None of the participants was deceived, and they were all made

aware of all their rights and obligations before participation in the study. Participants were also made aware that they would not receive compensation for their participation. Other information furnished to the participants included the expectations of their participation - this included the estimated interview length required for participation and probable risks which included psychological and social risks due to the nature of the topic.

- *Privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality*

Creswell (2003:75) states that researchers must be able to foresee the likelihood of damaging information becoming known to them when conducting interviews and in such instances, “...*the ethical code for researchers is to ensure the safety and privacy of the research participants and to pass on this assurance to all the participants involved in the study*”. In this regard, Nortjé et al. (2019:238) emphasise that researchers must follow proper protocols to ensure that private information is kept and controlled in a duly authorised manner by duly authorised persons. As mentioned, in order to protect the privacy of participants not known to the researcher their identities were only shared with the researcher once they agreed to it and they indicated their willingness to participate in the study. Pseudonyms were used during the audio recorded interviews and the transcription of interviews to ensure the anonymity of participants and confidentiality of data.

- *Protection from harm*

Marvasti (2004:135) emphasises that taking part in a research project should be voluntary and that no person must be psychologically or physically coerced to take part. Nortje et al. (2019:232) underscore that in research, the primary responsibility for minimising risk and harm lies with the researcher. The participants were informed of the type of questions that would be asked before the interview to assist them in making an informed decision whether they would like to participate in the study or not. Although the option was given to participants to stop the interview if they felt uncomfortable or experienced emotional distress, none of the participants did so. During the interview, participants were made aware that they had the right not to answer a question without explaining. This is important in research as protection from harm includes freedom to refuse to participate, and freedom to withdraw at any time without consequence (Nortje et al., 2019:234). Although the option was given to

participants to stop the interview if they felt uncomfortable or experienced emotional distress, none of the participants did so. During the interviews, participants were made aware that they also have the right not to answer a question without explaining.

#### **4.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The predominant limitation of the study was the small sample size. As mentioned, 15 women were initially approached to take part in the study, of which eight declined to participate. It was a challenge to recruit drug mules willing to speak about their experiences due to the clandestine nature of their activities. As a result, the sample size of the research was not large enough to be transferable. None the less, it is believed that the study will still contribute to the limited knowledge base on this topic.

Another limitation was the fact that case studies tell participant life stories from their perspectives. Hence it is a subjective interpretation which cannot be generalised to a more significant population. Although this makes it difficult to corroborate data, the emergence of themes served to validate the findings of the study.

The lack of research about female drug mules, specifically in South Africa, made it difficult to find literature on the topic. As a result, international research and media reports formed the most significant part of the literature consulted. Although a limitation, it also highlights the need for a study such as this one.

#### **4.9 CHAPTER CONCLUSION**

The methodological approach was outlined to demonstrate the scientific validity and reliability of the study. A qualitative, case study design was followed to conduct semi-structured interviews with seven participants. This research design enabled participants to tell their life stories, thereby producing findings that are rich in information. In the next chapter, research findings are presented.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS**

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#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this research was to explore what motivates females to become drug mules. Seven case studies of women who acted as drug mules are presented in this chapter. Case studies were found to be an ideal research design for this study as the research topic required a methodology that was niche-specific, distinctive, and detailed. The experiences shared by the participants through semi-structured interviews helped to shed light on female motives for becoming drug mules.

The case studies delved into the life stories of the participants as told from their perspectives. Each case study commences with an analysis of participant biographical data. This is followed by examining their family background and childhood. The participants adult life is discussed as a prelude to their introduction into mule work, followed by their lives as mules, including their motivation for being drug mules, and ending with their current circumstances and lifestyle. Since this research is an exploratory study, the case studies aimed to explore causal risk and contributory factors that led to the participants becoming drug mules. This discussion will be followed by a criminological explanation of causal and motivating factors for women to become drug mules. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the case studies and a summary and conclusion.

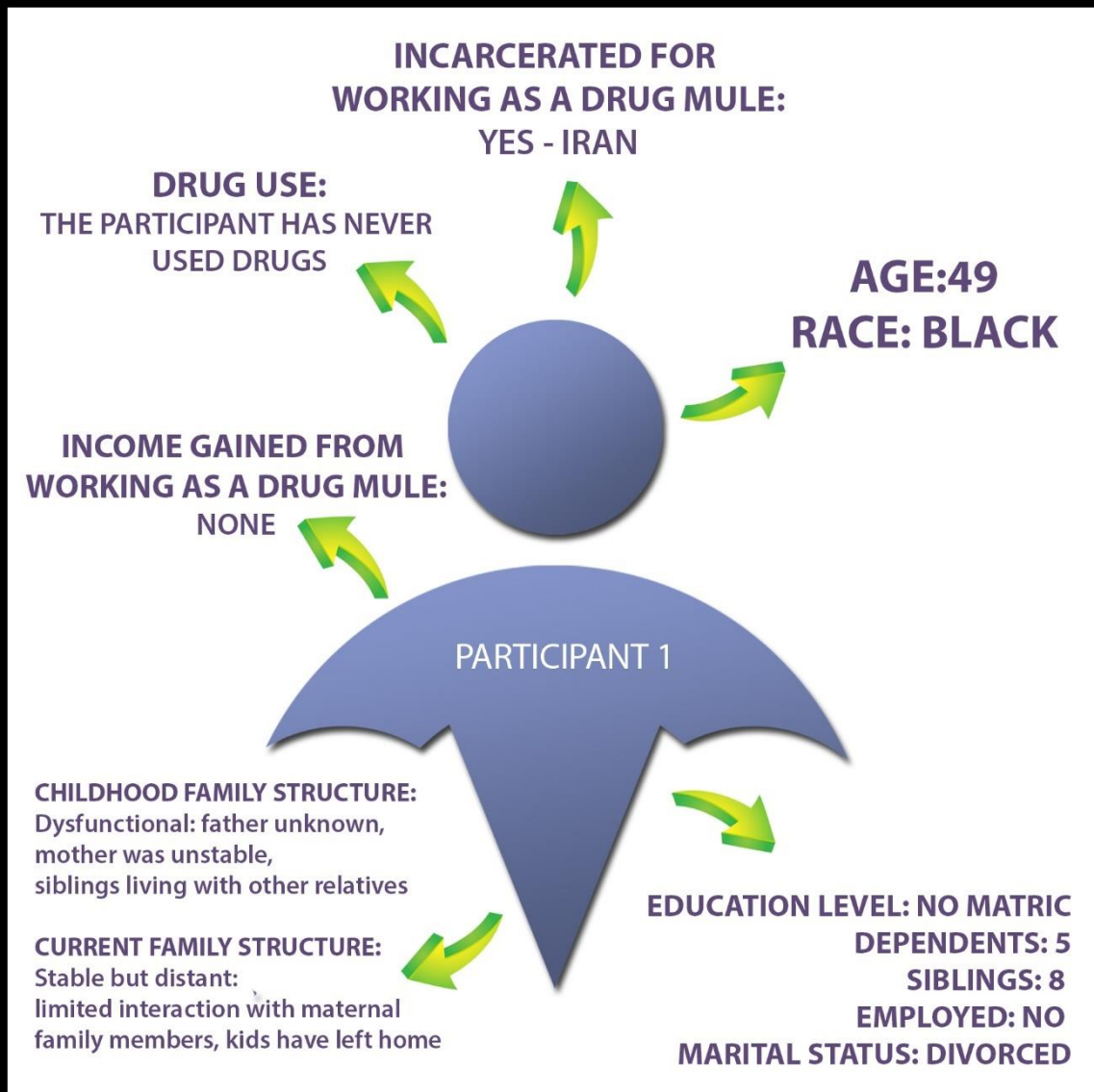
#### **5.2 CASE STUDY 1**

##### **5.2.1 Biographical details**

The following includes a summary of the biographical details of Participant 1. She is a black woman, forty-nine years of age. She did not complete secondary schooling and as such, never matriculated. She has eight siblings, all from different fathers. Her parents never married, and she has never met her father. She is divorced, has five

children and is currently unemployed. She currently lives in Alexandra township with two of her children.

**FIGURE 2: DEMOGRAPHICS: PARTICIPANT 1**



### 5.2.2 Family background and childhood

Participant 1 was born and raised in Alexandra township; she is one of nine children. Nevertheless, out of the eight siblings, she only knew seven as she claims that her mother would give birth and then give away her children. From the nine children her mother gave birth to, only two are from the same father and the rest from different fathers. She also does not know whom her father is and has never met him. She also did not know her mother for the majority of her childhood because she only officially met her when she was twelve years old. Participant 1 was raised by her grandmother and maternal aunt in Kwa-Zulu Natal, as her mother had other children to take care of and was not very stable. When the grandmother became frail, the Participant went back home to Alexandra to live with her mother. In recalling her childhood and upbringing, the Participant cited a lack of motherly support and encouragement. The Participant never completed high school; she explained that her family was poor, living in an overcrowded house in Alexandra township. Hence, according to her, her developmental options and opportunities were limited from a very early age.

As a result of her childhood circumstances – such as not knowing her biological father, and the separation from her mother at a young age - the Participant, was often teased, lacked confidence and was not a happy child as she explains in the following quote:

*“Mesikhula bekungekho mnandi, umama wami u be gula njalo nje. Uthi yena u be thakathiwe. Ngoba be ka hlale e gula, wangishiya noGogo, uGogo wam’ wangithata wangiyisa e KZN, ngikhuliswe ngu mam’ncane wame, e ne nkani ka khulu, e cheeky. Mengi funda standard 7, u grade 9 manje nga buyela eAlexandra ngo hlala no mama, be kungekho mnandi. I was always teased eskoleni ngingana confidence plus be sihlupheka sometimes singana cathulo ze skolo, nga yeka iskolo ngo standard 9.”*  
(When we grew up it wasn’t nice. My mother was always sick, claiming that it was because she was bewitched. Because she was always sick, she left me with my granny, my granny then took me to KZN where my aunt raised me, she was cheeky my aunt, very cheeky! When I was in standard 7, grade 9 today, I went back to Alexandra and lived with my mum, it wasn’t nice. I was always teased at school; I didn’t have self-confidence plus we were poor sometimes going without school shoes, I dropped out of school in standard 9). (sic).



### 5.2.3 Adulthood

The Participant fell pregnant in 1985 at 19 years of age, and she claims she did not love the child's father, "*be ku lezozinto nje*" (it was just one of those things). She subsequently had four other children with a different father to that of her first-born child, and in total, the Participant has five children. After the first-born child in 1985, the Participant birthed twins in 1991, and in 1993 and 1995 she gave birth to two other children. She eventually married the last man with whom she had children. She describes the marriage as toxic, mentally, and physically abusive, ultimately leaving her severely injured with a head scar that is still visible today. She left the marriage in 2000.

She describes her ex-husband as follows:

*"Ubaba wabantwana bam' be kuyi rubbish. Ube ngishaya nje and sihlala silwa. One day wangi shaya la ekhanda nge stena \*shows me scar\* nga lala esbedlela, nga thola na ma stitch. Wayengishaya phambe kwa bantwana."* (The father of my children was a rubbish. He used to always hit me; we were always fighting. One day he hit me on the head with a brick, I was admitted to hospital, I received stitches. He hit me in front of the kids).

The Participant states that she was never financially supported by her ex-husband during or after the marriage. She goes on to state that in order to make a living she mostly relied on piece jobs for an income where she would be paid very little.

### 5.2.4 Introduction to mule work

After many years of being unemployed, the Participant took up the position as a volunteer for a church in Yeoville, and this is where she met the Nigerian pastors that changed her life. The Participant posits that she had been working for a while as a volunteer at the church. After a couple of months working, the Participant asserts that the pastors took notice of her and upon further engagement and probing, they found out that she was working for free, was having a hard time financially and that she had five kids to support. The Participant underscores the fact that the pastors paid great attention to her struggles as far as they would sometimes offer her food parcels, while other times they would offer her some extra money and personally transport her home.

She emphasises the fact that the pastors were very kind to her and went out of their way to take care of her and her family, over and above the food parcels, they would also buy them electricity vouchers and other essential items. She reiterates by stating that:

*“Be beright yazi, be si thengela ukudla, a ma toiletry, ugesi, sometimes benginika imali.”* (They were alright you know, they’d buy us food, toiletries, electricity, sometimes giving me money).

The Participant states that she did not become suspicious when the pastors offered her a seemingly lucrative job in Iran in 2006 selling Persian rugs; instead, she accepted. The pastors told her that they were offering the job to her because they could see how much she was struggling. They told her that they were recruiting ladies to import rugs for them overseas. They convinced her that she would be able to do much more for her children financially, than what their help was currently affording her. They assured her that she could make as much as \$3000 a month which in 2006 was approximately R 15 000 a month depending on the exchange rate. She agreed, and the pastors made all her travel arrangements, including her passport application and visa forms. She was taken shopping for new clothes (so she could look professional in her new job) and bought groceries for her children which she explains as follows:

*“...Bangithengela yonke into, se siyenze a mashopping manje. Angithi elran embassy bangitshela ukuthi si gqoka kanjani, bengijabulile, at last manje bengiyosebenzela abantwana bami ngoba ubababo ube enga yenzi niks. Worse ehlala eduze. Bangi layisha e ma shops, bangithengela na ma bag. Nge langa loku hamba bathengela a bantwana bam’ igroza for I’m sure 2 months. Nga le lo langa lo ku hamba ba ngi landa nge moto bangiyisa e airport. Banginikeza imali, \$500 bethi ye taxi ne hotel e Iran. Be ngi qala uku flaya, be ngi qala u ku travela nje.”* (They bought me everything, we were doing shopping because the Iranian embassy told me how we should dress, I was happy, at last I was able to go and work for my kids because their father didn’t do anything. Worst of all was that he lived so near. They took me to the shops even bought me luggage. On the day of departure, they bought groceries for my kids that would last up to two months. On that day of travel, they fetched me with a car and took me to the airport, they gave me money, \$500, telling me that it’s for the taxi and hotel in Iran. It was my first time flying, in fact it was my first time traveling).

### 5.2.5 Mule Work

When Participant 1 arrived in Iran, she followed the instructions the church pastors gave her. She booked into the hotel and was met by a gentleman whose contacts she had been given before leaving South Africa. After two days she was checked out of the hotel by the Iranian contact whom the pastors had sent to meet her at the airport on her arrival. She was taken to a flat where another woman from Uganda was residing, and that is where she met the drug boss for whom she would be working. It was also there she was told that she was being recruited as a drug mule, her passport was confiscated and she, together with another Ugandan woman she found at the flat, were held captive for six weeks. During that time, Participant 1 got acquainted with the Ugandan woman. It was through a conversation with the Ugandan woman that Participant 1 discovered that the woman had been in Iran for a month. She had come to Iran with another woman. The woman from Uganda had been alone since the lady she arrived with had been sent to do a job as a mule. The Ugandan woman claimed that since her arrival in Iran, there had been a couple of other women who would be brought to the flat for very short amounts of time and then they would be taken away.

The Ugandan woman admitted to the Participant that she was approached similarly, being told the same story of coming to Iran to sell rugs. The recruitment of the Ugandan woman was very similar - however slightly different in that they told her they had initially wanted to offer her husband the job. However, the Ugandan woman's husband had been hospitalised in Uganda and was thus unable to work. She was told she would be a better candidate as a sales lady and should take his place instead. She agreed to go to Iran with her husband's consent and like Participant 1, only found out the true nature of the job after arriving.

The Participant together with the woman from Uganda were held hostage under guard, and they had their passports confiscated, they were not allowed to open the curtains or windows "*sihlala si dinusa me si dlula ifestere*" (always having to crouch when we went past the windows), while being forced to practice swallowing drug pellets every day, failing which, they were beaten and given rotten food as sustenance. The Participant explained her ordeal of learning to swallow drugs as follows:

*“Ukhumbule ukuthi everything there is happening midnight not during the day. Ba ya kuvusa, your stuff is here. They give you ibowl e li gcwele, idrug lakhona eish li lingana ne lipstick ba si nikeze na manzi ne tablet. Ba kutshela ukuthi amanzi unga wa phuzi ka khulu otherwise a zo gcwala isisu. Ende iqinile lento a yikho soft, ihard, ihard nje like a stone. Like mawungayishaya phantsi ithi “qhwa” like a stone. You must swallow hundred, so **\*name withheld\*** u ya qala, ngiyavuka manje ngibone ukuthi kuyenzwa kanjani, **\*name withheld\*** uthi uyagwinya a madrugs a wahli la, yhuuu awa yehli eish ba ya mshaya manje, bamshaya nga ma vuis manje.”* (You must remember that everything there is happening at midnight not during the day. They wake you up, your stuff is here. They give you a bowl that’s full. The drugs eish... It’s the same size as lipstick they give you water and a tablet. They tell you not to drink the water too much otherwise it will fill your stomach. And it’s hard that thing, it’s not soft, it’s hard, hard, like a stone. Like if you had to throw it on the floor, it makes a ‘qhwa’ sound like a stone. You must swallow hundred, so **\*name withheld\*** started, I wake up now to see how it’s done, **\*name withheld\*** tried to swallow, the drugs won’t go down, yhuuuu they won’t go down, eish they hit her now, they hit her with fists).

Participant 1 claims that she and the Ugandan woman had to learn to swallow drugs and excrete them every day while in captivity until it was time for them to leave. Every day, the women were given drugs and water while they were watched to see how much they could swallow. They were sometimes kicked and punched if they failed to swallow many pellets. Participant 1 goes on to explain just how complicated the process of swallowing the drugs was for her:

*“Nami banginikeza ibowl ne 1 litre. Ithi ngithi ngiyagwinya hey! Ngezwa into ingihlala la **\*points to her throat\***, ngizwa ngathi ngiyafa, umoya wam’ uyaphela, hey iyehla ka b’hlungu. Yo bis2 I’m sure ngithate almost an hour ukwigwinya into e yi one, manje uyangishaya, ye kos 3 ngathola ukuthi se ngina ma tonsils angikhone ukugwinya niks. Ngathi kuye yazini sir, uthe if umuntu a kakhone ukugwinya niks you are going to kill them, then you better do it because I just can’t take it anymore, my throat is swollen, I can’t swallow this thing you better kill me once and for all. 100? Mangi hlulwe yi 3 i100 ngiyoyiqeda nini”* (They also gave me a bowl and 1 litre. Just when I was trying to swallow, I felt something here **\*points to throat\***, I felt like I’m dying, I lost my breath, hey it was going down painfully. The 2<sup>nd</sup> one I’m sure I took almost an hour to swallow one thing, now he’s hitting me, the 3<sup>rd</sup> one I found that I have tonsils I can’t swallow anything. I just said to him, you know what sir, you said if someone can’t swallow

anything you are going to kill them, then you better do it because I just can't take it anymore, my throat is swollen, I can't swallow this thing you better kill me once and for all. 100? If I couldn't swallow three, how am I going to swallow 100? When will I finish?)

Despite the difficulty, Participant 1 and the Ugandan woman kept on having to practice swallowing the drugs day and night. Every night different Nigerian men would come and deliver drugs, and they would be given the delivery drugs to swallow. After being held in captivity for six weeks with limited communication with her family, the Participant was informed that she would travel to China and that after a successful trip she would be allowed to go back home. The day before their departure to China, Participant 1 was forced to watch a Nigerian male drug mule excrete the drugs that she was supposed to practice swallowing immediately afterwards - they told her just to rinse the pellets and swallow them, she will be fine, as that is how the drugs are exchanged from one mule to the next. The Participant was mortified and had more difficulty swallowing, and this resulted in her being beaten again. She was able to swallow forty-two pellets out of one hundred and fifty the Nigerian man excreted; she concealed the rest of the pellets around her stomach held in place by a *doek*. The Ugandan woman also managed to conceal the rest of the drugs on her body after swallowing sixty pellets as they had been left alone briefly on the day of their departure. They were again reassured that they would both be released after completing a successful trip to China, where, they would be paid the promised \$3000.

Participant 1 never completed the trip as she and the Ugandan were apprehended at the airport in Iran before they could board the flight. The Ugandan woman went through immigration first without incident, whereas Participant 1 was searched and arrested after a mandatory body search. The immigration officials went to look for the Ugandan and called her back for a strip search as she was travelling with Participant 1. After being searched, she was also arrested with another elderly Ugandan lady they had met at the airport before check-in. At the time of their arrest, the Nigerian who dropped them off at the airport kept calling incessantly to check if they had boarded without incident. Nevertheless, by that time, Participant 1 was already in custody, so she could not answer the phone, as the police had already confiscated the mobile phone.

The three women were all arrested and sentenced to death by the Iranian government for being drug mules carrying heroin. As a result of being forced to swallow drugs, the Participant had to be hospitalised on several occasions as the on the first occasion (the day of her arrest) the drugs had ruptured in her stomach leading to her being operated. The Participant woke up in the hospital and was told that she was going to be executed because she was found with drugs. As a result, the Participant became distressed and agitated as she was under the impression that she was going to be killed while in surgery. Participant 1 claims that in surgery, they removed the drugs and stitched her up only halfway as she woke up during surgery, and therefore they never completed stitching her up. When she was coherent, the Participant asked why she had not been fully stitched, and she was told by one of the doctors:

*“...don’t worry about that, you are going to die anyway, so don’t worry about that hole.”*

The Participant was hysterical, to a point where she had to be sedated. Three days later she was slightly better and was taken together with the Ugandan to Evin detention centre in Tehran.

The second time Participant 1 was hospitalised was after a week of being taken to the prison, due to the fact that her surgical wound had not healed adequately after being operated on, and added to that the squalor they were living in at the prison, resulted in her wound becoming septic and thus she had to be operated a second time. During that time, it was discovered that Participant 1 also had womb cancer which resulted in her womb being removed. The Participant was given the death penalty in 2007, and the Participant remained at Evin detention centre for four years and was moved to another prison, surrounded by water and snow for a further three years. During her time in prison, the Participant maintains that she was given tuberculosis (TB) prevention trial drugs without her consent. This was because she had been hospitalised twice already and was deemed to have a weak immune system. The Participant was given trial TB drugs to see how effective they were; such was the brutality of the Iranian prison system.

In total, the Participant spent seven years in prison. Participant 1 was released without notice under a presidential pardon in 2013. The Participant recalls how she found out about her pending release as follows:

*“ngangiphuma ku counting, ngezwa nje bengi biza ku loudspeaker bathi **\*name withheld\*** “azaki” come to the office. Ngimangele ukuthi kuyenzekalani ngobe bangibize nge gama bathi free nge language yabo. So ngimangele ngobe ngine death penalty so free kanjani? Even ne embassy me ngi ba tshela ngi free be ba ngayazi be cabanga ukuthi ikhanda lam’ a lithate kahle. Me be ngithata bangiyise ku embassy the following day everybody u be me phandle even no ambassador benga understand-e what happened. Bathi igovernor ivele ya sendi fax yo kuthi I’m forgiven I must go home. iEmbassy ya ngithengela iticket.”* (I was coming from counting {roll call}, I just heard them calling my name over loudspeaker saying **\*name withheld\*** free, come to the office. I’m now wondering what is going on because they called me by my name saying free in their language. So, I’m shocked because I have a death penalty so how am I free? Even the embassy when I told them that I am free, they did not know I am free, they just thought I am not right in the head. When they took me to the embassy the following day everybody was waiting outside even the ambassador did not understand what happened. They said the governor just sent a fax saying I’m forgiven I must go home. The embassy bought me a ticket).

## 5.2.6 Motivation for becoming a drug mule

When asked what motivated her to become a drug mule, Participant 1 indicated that she agreed to take the job mainly because of the money, and she was not aware that she would be required to become a drug mule since she was under the impression that she would assist with the importing of carpets. After her captivity, she agreed to swallow the drugs as she was forced to do so in exchange for her freedom and because she was desperate to go home. She was being held captive, living in constant fear since they were constantly threatened and sometimes physically abused. The Participant states that she felt overwhelmed because she had been away from home for a long time with limited contact with her family. She claims that she agreed because as she saw it, it was her only way out of the situation she found herself in. Her captors promised her that if she completed the trip successfully, she would be allowed to go home. She explains it this way:

*“Imali, but nje ngoba ngishilo, bengingayazi ukuthi ngi yoba i-mule. Bengifuna nje ukusebenza, ngiyenzele a ba ntwana bami imali, ngibuyele ekhaya.”* (Money, but like I said, I didn’t know that I was going to be a mule. I just wanted to work, make money for my children and go back home.)

From the above account, it was clear that the Participant could be classified as a victim of human trafficking. The Participant was vulnerable because of her unemployment, and because she was poor without good family support, which made her an easy target to be manipulated. The Participant was not street smart, nor did she show any business savvy, and she was, therefore, an easy target for motivated offenders, such as the drug smugglers that recruited her. It is furthermore clear from her narrative that the recruiting of mules was a well-organised and tested process. Meaning, the recruiters knew what characteristics and personality they should identify in a person to recruit them efficiently.

### **5.2.7 Current life and lifestyle**

At present Participant 1 is unemployed, and she lives in the township in an RDP house with her son. She is most sad about the fact that her incarceration was not good for her children especially her son, who is frequently in police custody because of the multiple cases of assault against him caused by his vicious temper. She explains his troubles as follows:

*“une anger nje engingayaziwo...ukwata loko angashisa indlu singaphakati. Sometimes uyangithusa, ngiyamsaba kodwa ngisaba ukuthi icommunity izomlimaza ngoba uhlala e lwa e stradini.”* (He’s got lots of anger that I do not know/understand, he gets so angry that he could burn the house with us inside, sometimes it scares me, I am scared of him, but I am more scared that the community will hurt him cause he’s always fighting in the streets).

The Participant has featured in a few television programmes telling the story about her ordeal in Iran. The only highlight the Participant could mention was that despite her ordeal, she was pardoned which enabled her to come back to her children. The lowlight is that her kids are still furious about her ordeal and often lash out. Also, because she is unemployed, she still cannot take care of their needs as she had wished to when she left.

The Participant claims that because she was unwittingly duped, she is more astute now, in that if she were promised another job out of the country, she would make sure to do her research first. She however continues:



*“...empeleni ngi khathele angilaphilanga kahle, ku no muntu u be fune ukungiqasha ngibe yi girl, angilaphilanga angeke ngikhona.”* (Truth be told I am tired, I am not well, there is a person who wanted me to come and work as a domestic, I don't feel well, I can't).

She states that the way the church pastors operated was so professional that even today, thinking back from the first time they introduced working in Iran until the day she boarded the flight, she still has a hard time identifying any red flags. Despite this, she categorically states that she will never accept any offers that seem too good to be true as that experience literally and figuratively scarred her for life. She maintains that she is better off suffering with her kids around her than risking her life as she did in Iran.

Participant 1 was manipulated and violated by people she trusted. Because of this, she was imprisoned for a crime she was forced to commit, ultimately losing seven years of her life. From the above narrative, the Participant's incarceration resulted in the Participant being left with permanent physical and emotional scars, which have made it difficult for the Participant to seek gainful employment. In turn, this had increased the Participant's vulnerable status thus perpetuating the cycle of poverty she was trying to break when she accepted the job offer.

#### **5.2.8 An analysis of causal risk and motivating factors**

An analysis of the case study highlighted the following causal risk factors and motives which contributed to Participant 1 becoming a drug mule. The story that the Participant shared has all the elements of forced criminality, which is strongly associated with the experiences of human trafficking victims. According to Frangež and Ručman (2017:232), forced criminality is a form of exploitation linked to human trafficking which involves victims of human trafficking who are trafficked explicitly for the sole purpose of committing a crime which includes but is not limited to begging, sex trade, pickpocketing, and drug smuggling. It can, therefore, be concluded that the Participant could be classified as a victim of human trafficking in that the elements required for human trafficking were present in her case. Added to that, the Participant was forced into criminality by being coerced into being a drug mule. Forced criminality and human trafficking usually go hand in hand, as persons who are trafficked are most often

trafficked with the sole intention of being exploited by their captors to their benefit, which is usually to make money out of their victims. The Participant was recruited and transported to Iran under pretences meaning she was deceived, to be exploited. According to van der Wilt (2011:303) exploitation in relation to human trafficking also denotes “...*forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery*” amongst other factors. The Participant was trafficked with the sole purpose of being forced to work as a drug mule, she was held captive and forced to swallow drugs in order to transport them to China, and this could be classified as slavery.

Below are the causal risk factors and motives which highlight the Participant’s vulnerabilities which resulted in her being forced to become a drug mule.

#### **5.2.9 Causal risk factors and motives**

- **Family background and upbringing**

- *An unstable, disorganised family unit*

Participant 1 grew up in a dysfunctional family structure with no parental support. Her grandmother and aunties predominantly undertook her socialisation as her mother was not a present parent. Participant 1 was socially isolated from her parents due to her not knowing her father or any of his family members and her mother’s illness. Furthermore, the Participant came from a low-income family with all family members being uneducated; her family was also often involved in fights and violence, and this, according to UNODC (2017:3) is an essential characteristic of human trafficking as it is rooted in the poor social and economic conditions of its victims. She also had no meaningful connection or relationship with her siblings because all of them had different fathers. UNDOC (2008:3) speaks to the fact that human trafficker’s prey on those who are weak, poor, and isolated. All these elements are present in the case of Participant 1, and because of her family background, including how she was raised, Participant 1 was a suitable target for human traffickers. Childhood victimisation and neglect set her up to become a victim of human trafficking. She was desperate to improve her living conditions but lacked the psychosocial skills to do so.

- **Socio-Economic Factors**

- *Unemployment*

Participant 1 never completed her schooling because she fell pregnant while still at school. According to Siegel (2011:171) and Bhorat et al. (2017:3), dropping out of school reduces earnings and future life prospects which may sometimes lead to deviancy. Participant 1 had limited developmental opportunities while growing up and hence limited occupational skills. Participant 1 has only ever worked as a domestic worker. She also worked contractually for a national government organisation (NGO) which compensated them as and when it could. The income was not fixed. When she started becoming ill, she stopped being a domestic as she could no longer perform all her duties. Research has shown that unemployment in South Africa is structural in that the system of apartheid has contributed to skilled labour as a means to economic growth whereas the country has an apparent skills shortage (Bhorat et al., 2017:1).

Knopp (2016:436) declares that unemployment is considered significant stress for individuals, and in light of this, the Participant admitted to being unemployed most of her life as she did not have the necessary skill-set to have a good-paying job due to not finishing her schooling. Verbruggen, Blokland and van der Geest (2012:2) maintain that a stumbling block starts to develop for people who have been unemployed for a long time, ultimately increasing their chances of committing a crime; in this instance being forced to commit an offence. In the case of Participant 1, she admits she had become despondent due to not working, as such she took whatever was offered to her in terms of jobs, in order to make ends meet. Her desperation to earn an income to provide for herself and her family ultimately led her to become a victim of human trafficking and subsequently a drug mule.

→ *Inequality and structural poverty*

Studies have shown that South Africa has the highest levels of poverty when compared to her counterparts in developing countries, resulting in many people being unable to meet their basic survival needs (Bhorat et al., 2017:1). Participant 1 grew up in Alexandra township during apartheid. Alexandra township - nicknamed *Gomorra*h from the biblical Sodom and Gomorra - is considered to be one of the most impoverished townships in Gauteng, where slums and squalor prevail (Nyapokoto, 2014:52-53). There is research that shows that poverty is not a sufficient reason for committing a crime. However, Webster and Kingston (2014:5-6) highlight that poverty in the context of crime is usually not a standalone reason but is triggered by and

includes other factors such as family stress, failure at school, parental unemployment and income poverty. All the mentioned elements apply to Participant 1. She grew up in an impoverished community, she had a dysfunctional family, she did not succeed at school, her mother was unemployed and unable to support her, there was no other income in the family, and thus the odds were against her from the beginning due to being born into poverty. All this was a trigger for Participant 1 to seek ways to better her situation, leading to her being manipulated because of her circumstances, trafficked, and forced to work as a drug mule.

- **Victimisation**

- Human Trafficking

Hume and Sidun (2017:8) stipulate that human traffickers use many methods, in different settings for various reasons for a variable amount of time in order to coerce and exploit their victims. In other words, human traffickers take their time in studying their victims, consider their personality type, the circumstances of where they come from and how best their victims can be easily exploited (Hume & Sidun, 2017:8). Human traffickers groom their victims, making them disposed to being exploited. Box (2011:28) supports this assertion stating that because trafficked persons are typically disadvantaged individuals, they tend to have common attributes that contribute to their exploitation such as limited education, limited employment prospects, limited education, and are usually economic migrants in search of better employment opportunities. All these characteristics match those of Participant 1, which in turn made it easier for the pastors to exploit her.

The pastors displayed a core characteristic of human trafficking recruiters which is the ability to establish trust with their victims, and to seem credible and authoritative (UNODC, 2008:5). The pastors did this by being emotionally and financially supportive of the Participant. They listened to her troubles, took charge of her life in a way by 'helping' her deal with the main issue the Participant was complaining about, which was a lack of money. This included the traffickers giving the Participant transport money, sometimes even driving her home, giving her money, and buying her groceries and sundries. This gave the Participant an impression that they cared about her, thus creating a dependent relationship, making it easier for the Participant to trust them. The pastors were suitable as recruiters in the case of Participant 1 as UNODC (2018:

12) outlines the role of the recruiter as being a person who is appealing to potential victims - for many people, pastors and people affiliated with churches are usually easily trusted and believed.

- **Psycho-social functioning**

In relating her narrative, the Participant seemed to display a lack of judgment which can be attributed to a lack of emotional intelligence. This has affected her ability to discern and make sound decisions. Emotional intelligence is described by Sharma, Prakash, Sengar, Chaudhury and Singh (2015:2) as the ability to be aware and understand one's emotions in order to process thoughts and regulate one's own emotions, to foster personal growth. In other words, emotional intelligence deals with an individual's self-awareness or lack thereof. Participant 1, grew up in a hostile environment that was not very nurturing, meaning that the Participant was never able to recognise her full strengths and weakness and most importantly she was never equipped with skills to recognise and deal with them. That is to say that, even if the Participant had been presented with a different illegal opportunity of making money, not necessarily as a drug mule, the Participant would have still agreed and taken the offer. Her life circumstances outweighed everything else because supporting herself and her family was her end goal. Her desperation, and lack of life skills - including her lack of emotional intelligence - ensured that the Participant would not have the social skill set to be discerning about her choices.

#### **5.2.10 Criminological explanation**

Criminological explanations for Participant 1's behaviour can be linked to the following theory:

→ *Walter Reckless' Theory of Containment*

Participant 1 was forced and coerced to work as a drug mule, and she was in effect, a human trafficking victim. At no point did the Participant make an informed decision to leave the country to work as a mule. That being said, the Containment Theory can still be used as a veritable explanation regarding Participant 1 and her involvement as a drug mule. The Participant was a vulnerable person in general, as discussed above, and this made her an easy target for exploitation. Thus, in the context of the Containment Theory, Participant 1's lack of resilience and emotional intelligence and

the socio-economic situation could be regarded as the push factors which according to Lanier et al. (2015:156) are the pressures and strains that emanate from a person's environment. The pull factors were the Participant's financial position, and the coercion by the deviant 'pastors' could be considered as pull factors as they influenced Participant 1 to accept a dubious job offer.

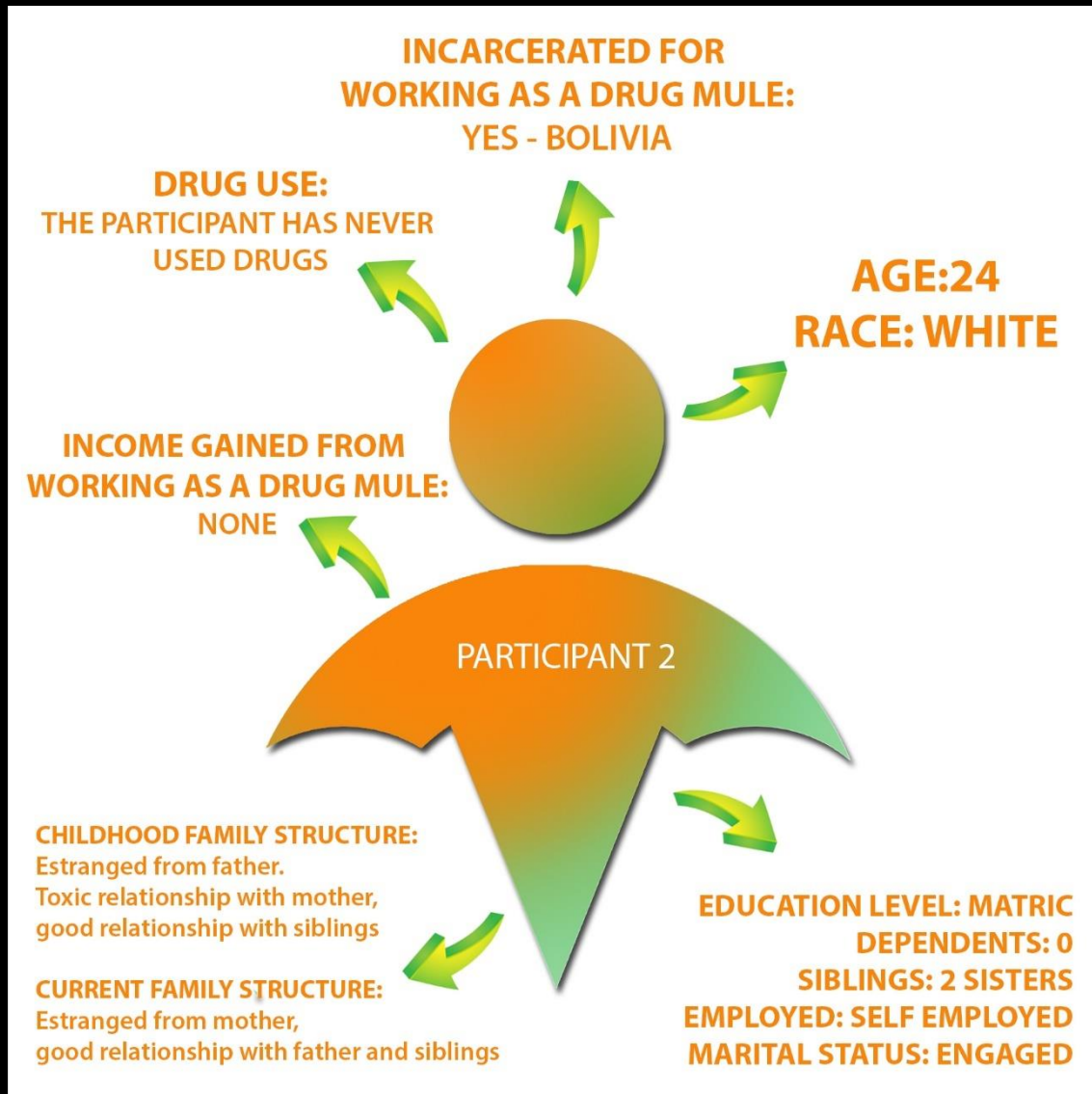
Overall, Participant 1 lacked emotional intelligence and resilience due to her socialisation during childhood. Participant 1 lacked both inner containment which is associated with self-worth and outer containment which is associated with support from social organisations. This means that the Participant was not sufficiently contained and as a result, was easily pushed and pulled into deviancy unbeknownst to her.

### **5.3 CASE STUDY 2**

#### **5.3.1 Biographical details**

As summarized below, Participant 2 is a twenty-four-year-old white woman. She is one of six children, where only three of the siblings were born to both her mother and father. Her parents are divorced and estranged, and she has limited contact with her mother due to her instability and drug abuse. The Participant dropped out of school and only completed matric after incarceration. She has never married, nor does she have children although she is currently engaged to a man she met after her incarceration in South America. She currently does motivational speaking about her life.

**FIGURE 3: DEMOGRAPHICS: PARTICIPANT 2**



### **5.3.2 Family background and childhood**

Participant 2 is 24 years old. Their father raised her and her siblings after her mother was arrested in Brazil for being a drug mule when Participant 2 was two years old. Her mother was sentenced to fourteen years imprisonment. Participant 2 described her relationship with her parents, as follow:

*“I was a daddy’s girl; my father raised us well. He raised us by himself.”*

During the fourteen years without her mother, her childhood and upbringing was good, stable, and protected. Participant 2’s mother was released when she was 14 years old. After her mother’s release, she went to live with them. The Participant claims that after such a long separation, her parents were unable to mend their relationship, although her father tried to support her mother emotionally and financially.

The Participant explains her mother’s inability to settle this way:

*“At the time my mother was very broken, and the problem was when she came back here she had missed a lot of time on being a mother and a lot of time just being free and finding herself. That for her, finding herself and experiencing life after leaving jail was more important to her than being a mother to three girls. She didn’t know how and for her as much as we tried to help her, we couldn’t, it was a very toxic relationship.”*

Due to her mothers’ dependence on drugs and being used to living as she pleased, the mother decided to leave Cape Town and go to Johannesburg. The Participant’s parents separated permanently and have had no contact with each other since. The Participant claims that her father completely withdrew and stopped talking to her mother. Her parents only contacted each other later after Participant 2’s arrest.

Participant 2 admits that her mother’s release from prison was a turning point in her life. At the age of 15 years against her father’s wishes, Participant 2 decided to move to Johannesburg with her mother. When her mother decided to move to Johannesburg, she also decided to leave her father’s household to go and live with her mother. Her father did not approve of her moving to Johannesburg because he knew how unstable her mother was, and he told the Participant that if she left, it was the end of their relationship. The Participant decided to leave with her mother regardless while her siblings remained with their father. Participant 2 left together with her mother and explained her reason as follows:

*“Remember I didn’t grow up with my mother, she left when I was two; I wanted a relationship with her, I needed to get to know her better. I was growing I wanted my mum, I wanted freedom and my mum was not strict like my dad.”*



According to the Participant, her mother was not a good parent, although not from lack of trying. She understands that her mother had left a toddler behind when she was arrested and came back to an adolescent young woman whom she did not know well. The Participant claims that living with her mother meant she had *“too much freedom that made me become clever”* and she was left alone to do as she pleased without any discipline at home. She justifies her mother’s careless attitude by stating:

*“Listen my mum had been in prison for fourteen years. She was finding herself; she was still discovering who she was, and she was having a hard time with it”.*

The strain between Participant 2 and her father meant that the financial support she had previously received from him dwindled. It was then that she started dabbling in illegal activities like *“...selling weed and cigarettes at school until I moved up to cocaine and CAT when I was seventeen,”* in order to make ends meet for her and her mother. Participant 2 explains her tumultuous life which led her to choose the path of crime as follows:

*“I had to pay for my own school fees, buy food at home, take care of my mother. Any type of income was necessary for me. By the time I was seventeen, I was collecting for a Nigerian dealer who I was working for and had taken me under his wing. When I turned eighteen, I was picking up merchandise from different suppliers and paying dealers and organising mules. I was not attending school.”*

Participant 2 admits that because she was born with a cleft palate and the defect made her very self-conscious from a very young age, she was often bullied and branded as *“...ugly with the krom mouth”*. She says as a result of that bullying, she became rebellious and somewhat of a bully herself. Due to her mother seldom being around, Participant 2 often stayed over at friends’ homes for periods of time. It was during that time that the Participant met a man that would later introduce her to the Nigerians, and she describes the introduction as follows:

*“I was staying at a friend of mine’s mother’s house, she had a man living with her called John (pseudonym), a gay guy. He was the one who actually introduced me to **\*name withheld\***. John was actually a drug mule he travelled for all the drug dealers in South Africa. He travelled all the time. I was always so amazed at his life cause he was always on holiday and I had always wanted to travel around the world. He had so many passports neh, his whole life seemed so exciting.”*

### 5.3.3 Adulthood

Owing to her truancy and misbehaviour at school, while living with her mum, Participant 2 was suspended, resulting in her not completing secondary school as she had to drop out in order to help care for her mum and other siblings. After Participant 2 dropped out of school, she worked full time for the Nigerian drug dealer John introduced to her. The Nigerian drug dealer offered to help her make more money than she was making by selling cocaine, and she accepted as, by that point, she had completely left school. Participant 2 maintains that the Nigerian became a considerable part of her life, stating:

*"I used to have lunch with him and his family, dinner with his wife and kids."*

According to her, they became friends. She describes their friendship as a brother and sister bond. Their relationship grew so close that she would often collect drugs at the airport from the mules and was in charge of making sure drugs were delivered on time and made payments to the mules. She also collected money from other local drug dealers in the area.

### 5.3.4 Introduction to mule work

The Participant admits that she had travelled before with John while he was delivering drugs. She states that she travelled with him twice but never carried any drugs and went along for the opportunity of free travel and a holiday. She acknowledges that on both occasions she knew he had drugs on him but because she did not, she didn't consider herself to be complicit should he get arrested:

*"I mean he was a gay guy, and you know gay guys have so much character and personality. At that time the guys were clever about hiding the drugs, so he would portray himself as a tourist and they would hide the stuff in his guitar or organ and stuff like that, I went along with him to Namibia and Hong Kong while he was working."*

Initially, Participant 2 was not supposed to be a drug mule but was tasked by her Nigerian criminal associates to go and source a new supplier for their drug business in Bolivia. She elaborates as follows:

*"He invited me to have lunch with him and his partner. It was just a random day. The request didn't surprise me because we would sometimes do that. They told me that*

*there was a new guy in Bolivia who was willing to sell us pure liquid cocaine at \$3000 a kilo where we were buying for \$8000 a kilo from our guy in Mozambique and they wanted me to go and broker the deal.” \*She agreed, as she claims they stood to make good money, at the time she was eighteen years old. She continued to say\* “Look, I was looking after my mother, I had missed my final exam at school, they wouldn’t let me write again, so I had to make a plan. My mother had burned her house down when she was high, I had no education, I was able to make between \$2000 and \$5000 a month. That week I had gone through a lot.”*

Participant 2 travelled to Bolivia on the 13<sup>th</sup> of March 2013, a date she remembers well as it was the day her niece was born. She claims that she was given money, a telephone number and an address of the place and contact she would be meeting in Bolivia. Once she arrived in Bolivia, she checked into a hotel, settled down and called the number she was given. She met up with a Tanzanian man who would be the contact to introduce her to the new drug dealers with whom they wanted to do business. During the day, the Tanzanian man told her to be ready later as they would meet the man who would take them to the drug factory. The Tanzanian picked her up later and took her to a Bolivian man she was supposed to meet at a restaurant. Participant 2 admits that initially, the meeting did not go well as when they arrived at the restaurant, she was ready for business but both men ignored her, having conversations amongst themselves in Spanish. She felt sidelined and agitated as she felt that the men treated her like a passerby, an accessory, and that they did not take her seriously. She describes the incident as follows:

*“I just told them, ‘Look, this is my meeting, I travelled too far to be treated this way. If you guys are going to talk amongst yourselves and just ignore me, then I shouldn’t be here.’ I know that Spanish women are very soft you know, they speak when spoken to, so I had to make sure they understand I am here for business. I thought I was so gangster, I thought I was so cool.”*

Admittedly Participant 2 claims that her bravado helped as they told her that the following day, she would be picked up early in the morning and taken to the factory.

She was picked up early in the morning the following day by the Tanzanian who was accompanied by two other men. The drive was a two-hour long journey during which Participant 2 reveals that she was slightly nervous as it occurred to her that she may

be in way over her head; she was driving through a jungle, in a country she did not know, in a car with three men where her family was not aware where she was. Despite her initial fears, all went well during the visit to the drug manufacturing factory in the Bolivian Jungle. After successful negotiations, a deal was struck establishing new business partners and contacts.

The Participant was preparing to come back home when she received a call from her Nigerian business associates in South Africa; she retells the story stating:

*“I was so excited to talk to him to tell him that we had a good deal, **\*name withheld\*** was very excited and told me he was proud of me and then said seeing as you’re already there I need you to bring back samples of the product, three to four?! **\*referring to kilograms\*** Can you believe that? I had to ask him to repeat it, I told him straight, no, I’m not one of your mules. He got a bit pushy and told me that the deal wouldn’t go through if he didn’t see the product first, I negotiated what I wanted from this and he agreed.”*

### **5.3.5 Mule work**

The Participant claims that she was hesitant and did not want to be a drug mule but admitted that the financial rewards would be considerably more than her previous remuneration on the street. When she accepted being a drug mule and bringing back samples from Bolivia, the Participant had negotiated that she be able to keep a percentage of the product to resell thus keeping all the profits herself. She acknowledges that her motivation was purely about the money she stood to make. Even though this was not part of the initial agreement, she rationalised that the material betterment that would emanate from the deal would allow her to provide for her mother and siblings. Also, she would be able to move to a nicer, bigger house, pay for her siblings’ tuition and live even better than how she was living before. Furthermore, she would be less dependent on her current dealer as she had already established her contacts and networks in the local drug world, and so this agreement would make it possible for her to be independent.

The Participant made arrangements with the Bolivian suppliers that she would take back samples which had to be prepared; the primary contact she dealt with in preparation was the Tanzanian man. The drugs (liquid cocaine) were concealed in

condoms stowed in shampoo bottles. The packages were filled and sealed by the Bolivians but delivered to her hotel by the Tanzanian man. The Participant left for the airport and declared the package accordingly. Participant 2 claims that the Bolivians, together with her Nigerian associates, had already organised an incident-free passage by dealing with their airport staff contacts and local police contacts, she states:

*“What happened was, when I was coming back there were a whole bunch of people that were paid in the process. The people that you need to pay so that you can always get through is the director of the airport and she was not interested, she just wasn’t budging and the other people are the police at that airport and the people that controlled the airport. Those are the people that can help you get through or they can cause you problems. So, the only people we paid were the police at the airport.”*

Participant 2 confirms that she was in the immigration line at the airport when she started getting concerned as the sniffer dogs kept on sniffing at her luggage and package. She says that she was nervous but did not give it too much attention as one of the airport staff had given her a signal that she would be fine. The Participant and two other random passengers were taken out the queue for a random strip search, and she says she was not nervous as she had no drugs on her person and also the other officials had indicated that she was safe. Indeed, they let her go after searching her where after she checked in and she went through immigration and boarded the plane without further incident.

According to Participant 2, the trouble started after the aeroplane doors were locked and the plane was on the runway slowly pulling off. She tells the story like this:

*“After I had made it on the plane and the plane was starting to take off, I was so relieved, I thought I’ve finally made it. I was so nervous about the dogs that wouldn’t stop sniffing and the search. For me, that was already a red flag. I was stressing, stressing, stressing. On the runway, done the control check and everything, I was like yoh! I’m good. And in that moment, I knew that I was never doing this again. But just before the plane was due to take off it came to a sudden stop. The doors opened and policemen including bloody army soldiers rushed onto the plane, I saw them ask the flight attendant something, and she pointed at me. I knew then that I’m in trouble, it’s over, it was very scary.”*

The Participant was removed from the aeroplane and taken into custody by the Bolivian police. Her bags were searched, and the drugs were found in the shampoo bottles. It turns out that one of the shampoo bottles had been spilt and that is why the dogs were sniffing her in the immigration line. While the dogs were sniffing her, some senior police officials were observing the dogs from behind a two-way mirror glass. They saw the dogs sniffing around her and yet none of the airport officials stationed nearby her did anything about it. The policemen made enquiries and took one airport official in for questioning. He was interrogated and admitted to having been bribed to ignore the Participant, and that is when the policemen stopped the aeroplane from taking off. Participant 2 was subsequently arrested, went on trial, and was sentenced for smuggling drugs since she had 16 kg's of liquid cocaine in her possession instead of the 3-4 kg's, they had initially asked her to bring back. Participant 2 was initially sentenced to 8 years in prison in 2014 but only served just over two years in San Sebastian Prison in Bolivia because she later received a presidential pardon as a way of alleviating overcrowding in prisons.

When questioned whether the Participant was specifically targeted, the Participant had this to say:

*“\*name withheld\* had never ever asked me to do anything like this before. To be honest, I had a funny feeling about it. It's hard for me to say whether it was a setup or not because he had never given me reason not to trust him. It was always about money for us. I was good to him; he was good to me. He visited me in prison, he sent me money.”*

### **5.3.6 Motivation for becoming a drug mule**

Participant 2 admits that she became a drug mule purely for financial gain. The Participant confessed that she was already heavily involved within a criminal organisation with Nigerians in Johannesburg. Participant 2 declared that she was moving up in the ranks within the organisation and was excited about being recognised for her hard work and loyalty. When the Participant was offered a trip to Bolivia to broker a deal with new suppliers, she agreed as it meant their organisation would be making more money. She accepted being a mule as she claimed her associates insisted, she comes back with a sample of the drugs before agreeing to the deal. They

had to make sure that her claims about the superior products were valid by testing the samples themselves since her associates were not physically present in Bolivia.

The Participant was very clear about what she hoped to get out of the deal, which was mainly money, more significant involvement in the business and recognition. She wanted to be a 'serious player.' Participant 2 claims that when she made her decision, she was mainly motivated by financial gains and the prospect of making 'serious' money that would follow. The Participant sums up her reason as follows:

*"Money. I wanted to be a big player in the game, I was making a lot of money. Being a mule was not a part of it but I did it on my terms because of the situation I was in back then. But it was definitely money. If I had succeeded, I would have made a lot of money and I could make more if I set a good team up to bring it across for me, I had the right contacts. Money, money and greed, I would have been far but maybe I would have been dead or in jail who knows?"*

The Participant admits that although she was initially blindsided, the deal was ultimately about a big career move for her. She was simply furthering her interests and her career in the drug trade. She had hoped that with the money she stood to make, she would be able to take care of her family and provide for them because her mother was in no position to do so. Participant 2 also declared that some of the money she had made working in the drug trade was used to finance her lifestyle. At a young age, the Participant had already been able to buy herself a BMW cash. By acknowledging that she wanted to grow within the ranks of a criminal enterprise, this clearly shows that the Participant made an informed choice about her criminal career and the lavish lifestyle it afforded her. This was a rational choice made by the Participant, a choice which she now regrets but ultimately made willingly.

### **5.3.7 Current life and lifestyle**

Participant 2 was given a presidential pardon and released from prison in Bolivia after serving just over two years. After her release, Participant 2 lived in various hostels in Bolivia while she was awaiting her passport and still gathering money for her return ticket. After her return, Participant 2 rekindled her relationship with her father. Incidentally, he was the first person she called when she was arrested in Bolivia and

was also the first person she called after her release. Participant 2 is now independent, does public speaking engagements about the dangers of crime and her life arrested abroad. She, too, like Participant 1, has appeared in a variety of television programmes talking about her experience. She claims that the highlight of her journey is meeting her boyfriend or “...*the love of her life*...” whom she met in the streets of Bolivia after her release. Another highlight is the rekindling of her relationship with her father and her sisters. She states that committing crimes is in her past, and she will never make such a decision again. Shortly after her return the Nigerian drug trafficker for whom she had previously worked was murdered, and many of the drug traffickers and drug dealers she had worked with or encountered when she was involved in the drug business are now deceased.

She cites her relationship with her mother as a lowlight in her current life as at the moment relations are severely strained and they are estranged. She says:

*“...my mother is very unstable; she stays in a caravan somewhere in Jozi. She doesn’t work and was arrested again for assault and theft. Our relationship is very toxic, and for the sake of my sanity I choose to stay away. I mean I will always help her if she needs something, but I must also draw a line because she uses me and always wants something. I am only good enough when she wants something and if I don’t give her, she threatens to kill herself and other crazy things. Yah no, I am better off without her, for peace for my sanity.”*

Participant 2 underscores the fact that children must appreciate their parents more because in retrospect she feels that had she appreciated her father and the sacrifices he made while raising her and her siblings alone, her life would have turned out differently. Participant 2 also completed matric after her return and enjoys her public speaking and motivational engagements and one day hopes to author a book about her ordeal.

### **5.3.8 An analysis of causal risk and motivating factors**

An analysis of the case study highlighted the following causal risk factors and motives which contributed to Participant 2 becoming a drug mule. From the case study, it was clear how the Participant was raised without her mother, and the subsequent estrangement from her father played a role in how the Participant became deviant from



a young age. Benson and Elder (2011:3) aver that self-identity in young adults is a lifelong process which is brought about and shaped by an individual's life experiences and development. Participant 2 had a seemingly stable lifestyle until the release of her mother from prison. Added to that, her esteem issues resulting from her congenital disability negatively influenced the Participant's identity. This led to the Participant making poor choices from an early age and into adulthood.

### **5.3.9 Motives and causal risk factors**

The following were the causal risk factors and motives identified:

- **Family background and upbringing**

→ An unstable, disorganised family unit

Farrington (2010:211) lists parental conflict and disrupted family units as a likely cause for delinquency in children. These disruptions include broken homes and separation from parents - more, especially maternal deprivation (Farrington, 2010:211). Participant 2 lacked adequate socialisation during her formative years due firstly to her mother's absence due to her imprisonment and secondly, her father's absence when she went and stayed with her mother. As mentioned, her mother's battle to adapt after her imprisonment meant that Participant 2 were mostly unsupervised and had to fend for herself while taking care of her mother.

Farrington (2010:207) concludes that the most critical facets of raising children are supervision and monitoring, discipline, and parental re-enforcement. None of the elements was present for a large part of Participant 2's childhood. Consequently, this put her a risk of coming into conflict with the law. This was the case with Participant 2; she was estranged from her disciplinarian father, she was seldom supervised, her mother was unstable and emotionally unavailable; moreover examples such as her truancy at school, selling contraband to her schoolmates and later drugs proved this assertion to be correct. Added to that, her strained relationship with her father could also be a contributory factor to delinquency as Farrington (2010:208) states that low parental involvement is also a causal risk factor associated with delinquency.

- **Criminal Associations and influence**

→ Criminal proclivity, criminal friends, and networks

Participant 2 viewed the people she partnered with, namely John the drug mule and later the Nigerian drug dealer and his wife, as friends. They became a pseudo-family to her. She received the acceptance and recognition from them that she did not receive from her mother. She experienced a sense of belonging and loyalty. This influenced her choice to become a drug mule. She furthermore admitted to being attracted to their criminal lifestyle and stated that she found John's lifestyle exciting. Rokven, de Boer, Tolsma, and Ruiter (2016:705) state that close friendships increase the risk of offending if one is already involved in criminal activities. Participant 2 was young and impressionable, due to the lack of capable guardians, and it was natural that John's lifestyle would seduce the Participant because, at that point in her life, she considered him as her brother such was the closeness and bond. Added to that, her trips with John influenced her in that they made the Participant glamourise John's carefree lifestyle and consider being a mule as a legitimate form of making money.

Notwithstanding her criminal proclivities, Participant 2 also had limited exposure to pro-social socialisation when she was growing up. Her role models were people that she perceived as being successful drug traders and mules such as John. Azad, Ginner Hau, and Karlsson (2017:265) found that when it comes to females, committing a crime is portrayed as a form of socialising. The Participant did mention that at school because she had a complex about her looks and low self-esteem, she resorted to hanging out with 'the cool kids', the rebellious kids who were always in trouble which is how she started selling contraband and drugs at school. This also bolstered her confidence as she states: *"I was good at that business, I made good money"*; thus Azad et al. (2017:265) proclaim that for females, committing a crime in the company of peers becomes a confidence booster giving a person courage to do things they would not necessarily do alone. This is evident in the case of Participant 2, as after dropping out of school the Participant graduated to associating with more mainstream criminals as her association with her rebellious school clique and the clientele was minimised by virtue of her not attending school. Moreover, Participant 2 experienced a sense of belonging and loyalty when she associated with delinquent peers as she felt street smart and grown-up.

- **Empowerment, excitement, and lifestyle**

→ *Greed, Lure of easy money, Love of fast life*

From a young age, Participant 2 admits that she was a rebel who was attracted to a thrill-seeking lifestyle. She, for example, mentioned that she admired the lifestyle her Nigerian connection and John lived. She started dabbling in crime from when she was at school, selling marijuana and contraband, choosing to continue after dropping out of school. Yadav (2018:73) describes crimes for gain as crimes that are committed mainly for economic benefits, such as cheque fraud, shoplifting, drug dealing, theft of money etc. The Participant admittedly goes against the standard interpretation of women involved in the drug trade and women as drug mules. The stereotypical explanation for female involvement in the drug trade is that women become involved in drugs as they have limited opportunities of making a good living and that women who are the primary caregivers for their children have more trouble obtaining an education or steady employment (Weber, 2019:1769-1770).

The Participant was attracted to crime and the lifestyle it afforded those around her. Participant 2 genuinely saw herself as someone who could make a good living and succeed from the proceeds of crime. She is unlike the general trope of drug mules viewed as unsuspecting victims of bad choices, who become drug mules because of circumstance as opposed to choosing the lifestyle. Howard (2008:250) supported this assertion and found that some women, like their male counterparts, may obtain some excitement, thrill and pleasure from illegal activities such as drug smuggling as it allows them an indulgent lifestyle on their terms. This is particularly true in the case of Participant 2. She mentioned that she aspired to move up in the ranks and become a 'big player' in the drug smuggling and sales market. Hence when she was required to bring drug samples back from Bolivia, she agreed to do so on terms that would benefit her economically but also enhance her business position. She was, therefore, an active and willing Participant.

### **5.3.10 Criminological explanation**

The criminological explanation for Participant 2's behaviour can be linked to the following theories:

- *Rational Choice Theory (RCT)*

Participant 2 was a willing Participant who made a rationale choice to act as a drug mule. The Participant admittedly enjoyed an autonomous pleasurable lifestyle sponsored by her involvement in the drug trade. Even though she was 'employed' in the drug trade working for the Nigerian on a full-time basis, Participant 2 views her involvement as being out of her own volition with her sole motivation being to make money and rise in the ranks of the organisation she was employed in. The Participant claimed that her job was exciting and adventurous, and although it could be dangerous, she revelled in the money and power that came with the job.

Piquero (2015:423-424) affirms that the RCT is based on the following propositions which are: committing crime is a deliberate act which ultimately aims to benefit the offender; people try to make the best decisions based on the risks and uncertainty involved, and decision making will vary depending on the nature of the crime. Simply put, it is believed that individuals make rational choices and that the choices they make are most likely to give them the greatest source of pleasure by weighing the benefit of the crime against the risks of being a drug mule. Based on the above-listed propositions, Participant 2 weighed the possibility of being apprehended if she were caught with the drugs against the amount of money and status she would derive from the transaction. At that moment she made an informed decision, a rational choice, acting with premeditation as a drug mule because of the pleasure she was going to get out of the deal after it was completed. Despite this assertion, Brown, Esbensen and Geis (2013:195) caution against RCT as a theory of crime in the strictest sense in that RCT incorporates choice variables within complicated crime equations. Lopez (2016:np) agrees by stating that when it comes to illicit drugs, the business is mainly motivated by profit; however, the business is also motivated by other factors which do not translate into economic projections. In sum, this case study as narrated by the Participant showed that she was a coherent actor who made a rational choice at that time, a choice that she felt would make her happier and leave her better off.

#### - *Social Identity Theory*

Participant 2's behaviour can also be explained using the Social Identity Theory. The role of identity is often overlooked but may be an essential component of criminality. It is a theory that proposes that individuals will attempt to raise their self-esteem through achievement and success, or by associating themselves with successful

company, and it attempts to explain how belonging to a group may influence individual's behaviour and thought processes. There are two fundamental aspects of the Social Identity Theory, which are an individual's self-identity and their collective identity.

The Social Identity Theory suggests that a person's sense of belonging is determined by the group which they belong to. Meaning that a person's in-group is the group that a person most closely identifies with, while the out-group is the group that a person does not identify with. In the case of Participant 2, her in-group consisted of her Nigerian boss and his family and John, the drug mule. These are the people she most identified with, looked up to and as a result spent most of her time with. The Participant was estranged from her father, so the lack of parental guidance was a contributory factor to why the Participant found refuge in the 'wrong crowd.' The Participant mentioned that she was treated like family by John and the Nigerian. She felt appreciated, so it was easy to consider them as her in-group despite their criminality.

There are four fundamental processes involved in Social Identity Theory, namely; self-categorisation, social identity, social comparison, and positive distinction. McKeown et al. (2016:7) state that social categorisation is the inclination for people to divide themselves and categorise others into 'in-groups' and 'out-groups.' Self-categorisation enhances as well as exaggerates the differences between the 'in-group' and the 'out-group.' The Participant's in-group was involved in crime, and the Participant categorised herself as 'one of them' in that there was a sense of camaraderie and trust amongst them. The Participant felt accepted; she felt like family, ergo it was easy for her to accept their way of living as good living because her in-group consisted of people she trusted and considered family.

Social identity is formed through self-categorisation, and it refers to the predisposition of individuals to adopt an identity in line with the individual's 'in groups'; in other words, their identity is built on several social and personal identities instead of the personal self (Caricati & Sollami, 2018:11). From when the Participant was still attending school, she formed her self-image by identifying with the rebellious crowd who participated in delinquent activities. The Participant mentioned her insecurities about her congenital disability which made her insecure from a young age. Added to that,

her mother not being around in her formative years made it easier for the Participant to form her self-identity based on what people thought of her. This ultimately led to the Participant associating herself with criminal syndicates and thus choosing a life of deviance from an early age. Thus, her social identity was born from an early age and continued right through to adulthood. Benson and Elder (2011:7) claim that adolescent children who grow up in poor or middle-class families tend to have more adult-like interaction with adults and also assimilate more household and financial responsibilities than their agemates who grow up in advantaged homes. This is precisely the case of Participant 2; she had to grow up quicker than most of her peers because of the unstable life that her mother provided for her. This, in turn, made her precocious, which precipitated her transition into adulthood at an earlier age than her peers.

From her association with the rebel group at school and the criminal syndicates, the Participant proceeded to take on the role of a tough woman operating in a dangerous world. Boduszek, Adamson, Shevlin, Hyland and Bourke (2013:17) argue that when a person identifies with a particular group, their attitudes shift towards an in-group norm, meaning the Participant behaved the way her in-group behaved. She behaved the same as the group she most identified with. She was moving around with 'henchmen' as most of the time, she would have to collect money and drugs from other criminal associates. Consequently, she became a 'tough girl', someone who instilled fear. This, in turn, boosted her self-esteem as for once instead of being teased, she was revered, accepted, and acknowledged, thus attaching an emotional, meaningful association with the group. This process is known as social identification. Boduszek et al. (2013:25), found that for some individuals, being part of a criminal group means that there is a higher likelihood of developing positive emotions towards belonging to that particular criminal group as that group becomes a central aspect in their lives.

The third process is social comparison and positive distinctiveness which is the aspect of the Social Identity Theory that communicates how individuals try to recognised traits that make out-groups inferior to their in-group (Caricati, 2018:59). Individuals use self-analysis to compare themselves to the 'in' or 'out-group' in an attempt to boost their self-esteem and confidently establish some superiority over others, in turn raising their social identity in order to maintain their self-esteem. Participant 2's association with,

and success she achieved within a criminal group, raised her self-esteem and became a source of pride which helped form her identity and sense of belonging socially.

In summary, McKeown et al. (2016:168) claim that according to the Social Identity Theory, human motives and actions are formed by how people justify the situations they find themselves in. In this case, the Participant made a choice to be a mule to secure the deal she made and also make extra money from the merchandise she was going to be able to keep. It was just business. Also, the Participant formed her persona around the fact that she had to provide for her family at a young age due to her mother not being a present parent.

- *Walter Reckless' Containment Theory*

The Walter Reckless' Containment Theory is similar to the Social Identity Theory in that it emphasises that individual behaviour is linked to relations within certain social groups and that different social settings may cause some people to think, feel and act in a way that fits the pattern of their current group or identity in that group. However, the core foundation of the Containment Theory is that people must be contained from committing a crime by using social and personal safeguards that protect a person from committing a crime (Flexon, 2010:7). The underlying principles of the Containment Theory can be demonstrated in the case of Participant 2. According to Burke (2009:248) and Flexon (2010:8), the Containment Theory claims that both outer and inner containment are the factors that act as a buffer and help prevent delinquency in people. In other words, the theory suggests that in order for a person to commit a crime, that person must break through outer and inner containment combined. In this case, for Participant 2, the outer containment measures that could prevent deviancy were not firmly in place and as such the Participant turned to crime. Participant 2 claims she felt tremendous pressure to financially support her family and prove herself to her criminal associates, also, her family environment was unstable, and her mother was not a positive influence in her life. In the end, Participant 2 did not have much guidance and support from her parents that could nurture and monitor her, and in essence, she did not care much for social norms and rules as she had to do whatever was necessary in order to take care of business. The Participant's inner containment, which is the ability of a person to regulate themselves, was also weakened as admittedly she had self-image issues, she felt like an outcast at school, her family

dynamics were unstable, added to that she was not a confident person from childhood, and moreover that she performed poorly at school. Her personal circumstances, the need to prove herself and this quest to create a tough girl façade were the overriding factors which undermined her inner containment.

There were also many push and pull forces that caused the Participant's deviant behaviour. An example of a pull is that Participant 2 learned when she was still at school that in order for her to make money to be able to take care of herself and her family, she would need to illegally sell drugs and contraband in order to reach that objective — added to that the Participant was already socialising with delinquent friends at school and the local drug dealers. That being said, Participant 2 was pulled into illegal enterprise and drug circles by her attraction to it as a form of earning status and making easy, fast money. The pulls were her criminal associates which included John the drug mule and the Nigerians. The pushes that caused Participant 2 to get involved in the crime were her low self-esteem caused by her cleft palate, dropping out of school, her unhappiness with her unstable living conditions, unstable family, socio-economic problems and frustration with her emotionally unstable mother.

In conclusion, Lanier et al. (2015:156) affirm that youths will be steered towards deviancy by 'pushes' caused by environmental pressures and strains while 'pulls' are opportunities provided by peer groups. This was demonstrated in the case study of Participant 2, who began her involvement in crime while she was still a young girl in school.

## **5.4 CASE STUDY 3**

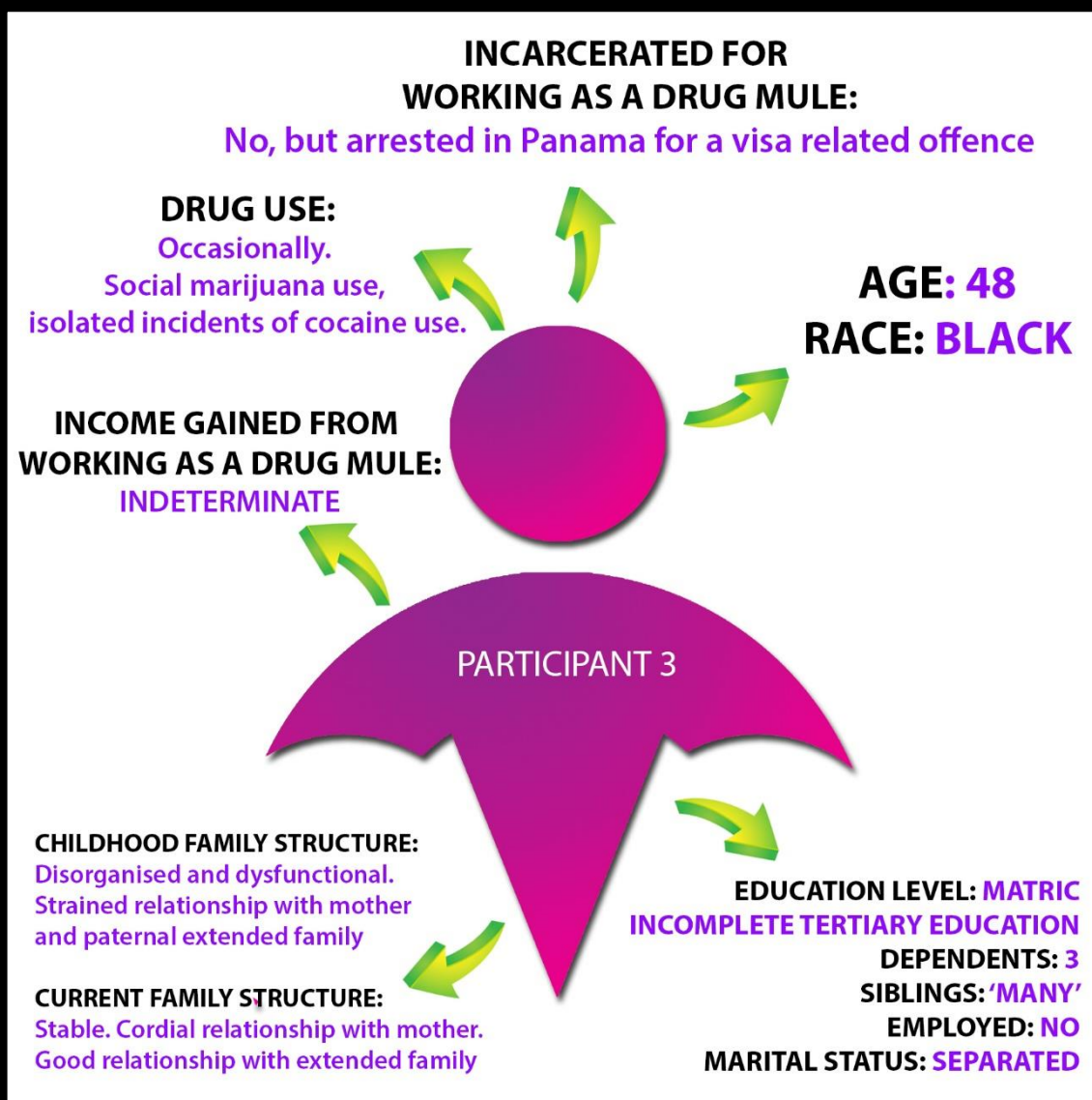
### **5.4.1 Biographical details**

Participant 3 is a black, forty-eight-year-old woman. She is the firstborn of her father's children, and her parents were never married. She has many siblings and cannot be sure of the exact number as her father was considered a playboy in his youth and admittedly fathered many children. She is, however, the only child between her mother and father. The Participant completed her matric but not her university degree where she was studying law. She has three children and is still legally married even though



she and her spouse are estranged and have been living separately for 10 years while still contesting the terms of their divorce. The Participant is unemployed and sometimes 'hustles' by either doing odd jobs for friends or selling mobile airtime to make money. She lives in Alexandra with the mother of her friend.

**FIGURE 4: DEMOGRAPHICS: PARTICIPANT 3**



#### 5.4.2 Family background and childhood

Participant 3 was born into a prominent business family in one of the Pretoria townships. She had an inexplicably cold relationship with her mother, which persists to this day. Growing up, she was a 'daddy's girl,' and her father was besotted with her as she lived with him. She is the only child to her mum and her dad; the firstborn child to her dad and her parents were never married. Since the Participant's father was wealthy, he was always viewed as the local Casanova, and as such, he had many girlfriends resulting in him fathering many children. Also, because of her father's wealth, the Participant was spoilt and often indulged to the chagrin of her extended family. This led to her being ill-treated by family members, including her maternal relatives, because her mother would be away for long periods. She explains it as follows:

*"Ne go nale jealousnyana because papaka na nthata too much and ba feel-a gore wang spoila. Also mamaka na se yo so geke na le bone o mongwe le o mongwe ne ba ntshetsa dikgupi mo dimo haka."* (There was an element of jealousy because my father loved me too much and they felt that he was spoiling me. Also, my mother was not there so when I was with them, every Tom, Dick, and Harry would unleash their resentments on top of me)

A lot of pressure was put on her to become her father's successor, so during school holidays, she would work at the family business, which consisted of wholesale shops and bottle stores. Participant 3 attended and completed high school in Pretoria, consequently enrolling for a law degree which she ultimately did not complete.

#### 5.4.3 Adulthood

At twenty-one years old, her father died suddenly under mysterious circumstances. The Participant admits that her father's death was very hard on her and that his passing became a catalyst for her to be ill-treated by family members. As such, it became the turning point in her life. The ill-treatment was because her father left the majority of his estate to her in his will. Soon after his death while his estate was being wrapped up, the will disappeared and thus her father's final testament was never executed. The Participant says this about her father's death and the period preceding it:

*“He had gone to Botswana for business for his diamond dealing things, I remember that weekend so well cause we had fought. He promised to buy me shoes but he didn’t, he left without buying the shoes. When I got the call that he had died I was broken and a song came on the radio by Percy Sledge – “what am I living for if not for you”, my heart was completely broken, physically sore because o ne a rata go mpinela yone. His death was from a car accident but it was sinister, and it was later confirmed that it was an assassination by the whites, maburu.”* (He had to go to Botswana for his diamond dealing things, I remember the weekend well because we have fought. He had promised to buy me shoes, but he didn’t, he left without buying the shoes. When I got the call he had died, I was broken, and a song came on the radio by Percy Sledge – what am I living for if not for you, my heart was completely broken, physically sore because he used to like singing it to me. His death was from a car accident, but it was sinister, and it was later confirmed that it was an assassination by the whites, boere.)”

The aftermath of her father’s death led her to stay with her paternal grandparents, but that arrangement did not last as the grandfather claimed that she reminded him too much of her father *“...and what they lost”*, so they arranged for her to move in with other family members. She settled in well with the family, and it was there that she was introduced to how to commit fraud by her uncles and cousins. She became very good at bank and cheque fraud to the point that she ended up being at the forefront of the business. Interestingly enough, the Participant claims that her involvement in the crime was a way for her to fit in with her family, as after she lost her father, she had no one to stand by her.

She did not go out of her way to participate in illegal activities, but the fact that she was good at it enabled her to take over from her dad as the family provider, she states:

*“ke bile ka nna yena, everybody na nthata because ke ba tlhokomela.”* (I became him, everybody now liked me because I took care of them).

The Participant confirms that the provider role inadvertently became part of her persona in all her significant relationships with friends, family, and lovers. She emphasises that her value was based on her ability to care for everyone and because of that, she became the family matriarch from an early age despite her grandparents, aunties and mother still being alive.

Soon after her father's passing, the Participant met a Nigerian man through a mutual friend, who at that time was on a work assignment in one of the big state-owned enterprises. He later became her husband and father to her children. The Participant admits that she was not smitten with him when they met, and instead, he was the pursuer throughout, and she enjoyed the attention. She said the defining point for her to choose him was based on the fact that for once she was being looked after and provided for instead of the other way around. With him, she was treated like her father treated her, she was spoilt, and he was attentive, so she gave in to the relationship. She declares:

*"Ne ke sa morate \*name withheld\*, ne ke no mo use-a. Today ka nnete nka se go botse gore go tlile byang re be refitlhe mo re leng. O na mpha attention thaata, mara ne ke sa morate."* (I didn't love *\*name withheld\**, I was just using him. Today I honestly can't tell you how it came about that we are where we are now. He gave me a lot of attention, but I didn't love him).

She was basically enjoying the attention and stated that at that time, she was not dependent on him as she was already making money from fraudulent activities.

When Participant 3 was twenty-four years old, she fell pregnant and states that the husband (who was then still her boyfriend) forced her to have an abortion. After her release from the hospital, she fell pregnant again, and again the husband forced her to abort which she did; however, she was unaware that she was carrying twins so only one baby was terminated and the other survived. She relays the second abortion incident as follows:

*"I fell pregnant, at six months I did abortion, he forced me to have another abortion, and I nearly died. Three days in a coma, three days in ICU, the other one died, one child survived."*

The abortion was traumatic, and the Participant claims that this is where her bitterness towards her partner began. Her boyfriend could sense the disconnect and the Participant's unhappiness, and he decided that they should get married and raise the surviving child in marriage. So, the Participant and her boyfriend got married a short while after that, at the Department of Home Affairs. Unfortunately, the surviving child

died when he was eleven months old from sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). The Participant and her husband went on to have another three children.

Participant 3 says that in retrospect, her husband decided to marry her because he wanted to obtain South African citizenship. At that time, he was a small-time drug dealer, no longer working for the state-owned company that initially brought him to South Africa. She admits, however, that she cannot state this categorically as he was already in the country on a work visa, so ultimately, he could have achieved citizenship without her. Soon after they got married the physical and verbal abuse escalated to a point where the Participant had a nervous breakdown. The Participant claims that it was the most traumatic time of her life as she was still dealing with the loss of her child; she relates the story as follows:

*"I think I was in so much depression; I was more than abused than I was after my father died. During the abortion, I saw that child gasping for air during the abortion; it was a girl; he was so emotionless that day. Afterwards, my friends would tell me to leave him. After the death of my son, my friend said chomi you must leave this man, chomi you must leave this man but because of my insecurities I could not. Like I said yes, but I made excuses, like no, they want him, no, they don't want to see me happy. You know like I didn't know what was going on with me anyway. I was just, shuuuu, I think in that little moment **\*name withheld\*** wore out the heroine in me because I became very vulnerable, very insecure, like I said to myself that I will never have any more children, like this is the last one and that made me to be weak to him, you know, I'm not dealing with my emotions, it gave him power over me." sic.*

As their relationship progressed, the Participant became more involved in his drug business, and at times, his associates would drop product and money at their home. She started inadvertently collecting and dropping money and taking a more active role in the business when he was not around. The Participant says the following about her gradual involvement in the drug dealing business:

*"**\*name withheld\*** did not bring up the children, it was me all the time, I'd bring in money, give him money taking care of my children. And then his business, I never... **\*pauses\***...the only things I would do is to keep the things or maybe go deliver with him sometimes or maybe go and deliver for him. But I gave him a contact at some point, a friend of mine who approached me. They were getting things from the government, evidence that's being destroyed and things like that. I told my friend, go*

*and work with him, I was making money from my other things, so I said go and work with him. I had no benefit in those things; there was never self-benefit.”*

It was also during this time that Participant 3 experimented with drugs. The Participant says that one day while she had a depressive episode, her husband left to go to a meeting, and she ended up testing cocaine he had manufactured. Participant 3 claims that because she had never used hard drugs before, she was not aware of the strength and potency of the drugs, and as such, she had a drug overdose. She describes the incident as follows:

*“Shooooo our relationship was rocky, rocky is an understatement actually \*chuckles\* I guess maybe that’s why he got more comfortable with his girls because maybe ne go nale (there was) more harmony there. I was rebellious at some stage. More rebellious because I was having to be defensive all the time. I was vulnerable always at home, I wanted to go to my family, but he said I can’t go home he was going to Nigeria. At some stage, he left me with his customer’s gore ke yetseng leng ne leng (so I can do this and that) I even went to the extent of negotiating new deals, he came back after a month and was happy I’m growing his business. There was no benefit for me, ha le happy ke happy (when he’s happy I’m happy). One day I tried to snort and that’s the last thing I remember when he found me yhoooo, I was something else. He called the paramedics, When I’m there dying that day when the paramedics were busy, he told them to rest and watch world soccer, he was annoyed, like ke a mo inconvenience-a (like I’m inconveniencing him) he didn’t care. I wanted to mourn my child at home, and he just wanted to jola (date women) at home. I needed that support in him. Love was not a role here, not at all. I felt I needed him. I lost my power.”*

When Participant 3 was asked why she decided to try snorting cocaine that day, she replied:

*“I don’t know, ne ke no try-a fela.”* (I don’t know, I was just trying).

Participant 3 admits to snorting cocaine on numerous occasions after that, but she insists that it was never a habit and that she was not addicted.

Participant 3 stresses that the passing of her father, her disrupted childhood and meeting her husband were essential elements in the path she chose. By the time she met her husband, she was already committing fraud as a way of making money. The husband was a small-time drug dealer who would later in their marriage move to

manufacturing and distribution of drugs. Thus, the Participant got involved in the drug business by virtue of their marriage, which the Participant claims was a natural progression as she was already savvy and 'street smart' being a bank cheque fraudster, so the idea of being involved in the crime was not daunting.

#### 5.4.4 Introduction to mule work

The Participant emphasises that her husband 'groomed' her into becoming a mule during the time she was most fragile mentally. The husband would bring his drug mule girlfriends home and sometimes disappear for many days with them. When she questioned him about it, he would claim they bring in the money that enabled her to live such a comfortable life so she should not make them an issue. This went on for a while until she was offered a job in Europe, and then everything began changing for them.

Participant 3 claims that she started being fully involved in the drug business when she came back from Europe after her job contract ended. The first-time Participant 3 agreed to be a mule was mostly because at that particular time, she had been employed in Europe by a foreign legal body, and her marriage was collapsing. This foreign body had issued her a diplomatic passport, and she was the primary caregiver for her small children. Her diplomatic passport ensured that she was hardly targeted at airports during her travels. She describes how the husband first asked her to be a mule:

*"I had a free pass mo airport (at airport). I'm having a small child, with a European passport and so **\*name withheld\*** (husband) decided to ask me to try and take stuff cause they won't ask me anything because of my status. And you know the relationship was very rocky. I didn't understand, but I was doing it. **\*name withheld\*** uses people, he wouldn't want to make a deal that would bind him, that's why he took so long to ask me cause nna ke bua di details pele (cause I talk details first). I would tell him ok fine; I will carry this much."*

The Participant stresses that it was not her idea initially as her husband was the one who identified the diplomatic immunity loophole quickly and capitalised on it. He eventually convinced her to be his mule under the guise that they could build an empire together. '**Together**' was the selling point for the Participant as she had grown to be

emotionally dependent on her husband, and was always trying to please him or as she says:

*“...make him love me, make him see the value in me.” (sic).*

Upon reflection, besides the greed element, the Participant cited her emotional neediness and tumultuous marriage as another force that drove her to get involved as a mule. The Participant claims that she was so insecure in her marriage and emotionally dependent that it became a catalyst to her agreeing to be a drug mule for her husband. She elaborates as follows:

*“Ka nnete, le nna, I don’t understand how I agreed, I don’t understand how I even negotiated on it. I think I was starting to realise that I don’t wanna be taken for granted but it still hurt. I remember telling him I’m the mother of your child. You should be using your girlfriend, not me, what if something happens to me?”*

Upon challenging Participant 3 about her statement by asking her where her sense of agency was, as her testimony implied that she was a victim and was not necessarily taking responsibility for her role in deciding to be a drug mule, Participant 3 repeated that she did not understand how she agreed to be a mule, but she acknowledged that her husband’s mistress was central to her decision somehow. Participant 3 declared that trying to please her husband was the overarching purpose of her agreeing to be a drug mule.

The husband’s mistress was also a mule that worked for him, and this affair, together with her husband’s manipulative and controlling nature led her to compete with the mistress. She acknowledges that one of the main drivers for her approval was the fact that she did not want her husband favouring the mistress over her. She says the following:

*“na dula a nkopantsha le bona, and because ne ke yo dula ko Europe ne ke tshaba gore ba lo nna close le go feta.”* (He was always mixing me with them, and because I was going to stay in Europe I was scared that they were going get closer).

Participant 3 recalls a particular time when she couriered money to their drug associates in Peru. Her husband had wanted to use his mistress for that trip, but



Participant 3 refused and ended up taking the money personally, but when probed further about her reasoning, the Participant stated:

*“Using **\*name withheld\*** for a trip that involved large amount of money with our contacts meant that I was accepting **\*name withheld\*** into our relationship. I am giving her a key into our marriage.”*

Although her husband was both emotionally and physically abusive, she knew that it would not have changed the status of their toxic relationship regardless of how much she tried to please him. All these factors combined played a significant role in the decisions she made to leave the relationship and institute divorce proceedings finally. The Participant says that the final straw was when her husband brought the mistress to live in the same house with them. When she questioned her presence and his disrespect, he beat her severely. She left for her family home in Pretoria and never had further access into her home - her clothes were packed and delivered to her. The mistress still resides there, and she will not leave, simply claiming she earned the house. The husband has bought another house in Sandton and lives there, but he and his mistress are no longer together. Participant 3 and her husband are living apart, although still technically married as the divorce has still to be finalised because of their inability to reach a suitable settlement agreement. Participant 3 adds that her husband has still not received his citizenship, so from time to time, he panders to her proposing reconciliation in order for her not to sabotage his chances of citizenship.

#### **5.4.5 Mule work**

Being the astute businesswoman, she was, Participant 3 insisted on some form of agency when agreeing to drug mule. As previously discussed, this included being able to negotiate rules such as the quantity of drugs she carried, which airlines she would use (going as far as making the bookings herself) and the compensation she would receive - rules that most mules are not in a position to make. She was also able to negotiate her compensation by keeping some of the drugs to resell to her network and keeping all of the profits from those transactions. The Participant cannot recall offhand how many trips she made as a mule; she says, “...*probably four or five times.*”

She continued being a mule until she decided to stop because she was almost caught with the drugs once while in transit. She describes that particular trip as follows:

*“Waitse that trip e ne e le snaaks yang. For the first time in a while **\*name withheld\*** asked me about my travel itinerary, gore ke tsamaya what airline, what flight, what time. Ka bona fela gore mo, ke mathata. Ke mmoditse maka ka everything, the day he thought I was leaving ka lo robala ko **name withheld**. The following day a nkisa airport. We had to transit ko **\*name withheld\***, and they asked us gore re fologe. I was so scared cause when we had to go back on the flight they were searching all passengers. I ran to the bathroom and flushed some of it but not all of it cause they were busy announcing final flight boarding. I just thought ko tshwarwa, go fedile. I was so lucky cause I was the last passenger in the line, the flight was already running late so when it was my turn to be searched, they didn’t they just waved me through, instead, they told me gore ke phakise, flight ya tsamaya. Ke feleleditse letsatsi le o, a zanke ka boela.”* (You know, that trip was just funny, for the first time in a while **\*name withheld\*** asked me about my travel itinerary, like which airline am I using, what flight, what time. I just saw then that this could be trouble. I told him lies about everything, the day he thought I was leaving I slept at **\*\*name withheld\*** house. The following day he took me to the airport. We had to transit in **\*withheld\***, and they asked us to get off the plane. I was so scared cause when we had to go back onto the flight; they were searching all passengers. I ran to the bathroom and flushed some of it but not all of it cause they were busy final flight boarding. I just thought that I’m going to be arrested, It’s over. I was so lucky cause I was the last passenger in the line, the flight was already running late so when it was my turn to be searched, they didn’t, they just waved me through instead they told me to hurry up, the flight is leaving. I stopped that day, I never went back).

Despite her involvement in crime, the Participant was never arrested for being a drug mule instead the Participant was arrested in Panama City for a visa violation in that her visa had expired when she was visiting friends.

#### **5.4.6 Motivation for becoming a drug mule**

Participant 3 acknowledged that her motivation for being a drug mule was purely emotional. She claims that whether she had agreed or not her husband would have used his mistress, thus causing them to drift further apart. Undoubtedly, their marriage was rocky and, in a way, agreeing to be a drug mule could be described using the

metaphor 'last kicks of a dying horse.' This sums up the state of Participant 3's marriage. The Participant summarises her motivation like this:

"It was really all about **\*name withheld\***. I wanted to please him; I was competing with his mistresses. Hape o tlhalefisitswe ke nna mothola. I never really cared much about the business and making money as a mule cause half the time after the trips, he wouldn't pay me what was due. Instead na mpetha, a mpethela hore ke rekile diaparo **\*laughs\***. I was okay with my fraud it was what was actually putting money on the table not his business cause I was contributing most of the household expenses. Nkare obuti o le na ntoyile." (It was really all about **\*name withheld\***. I wanted to please him; I was competing with his mistresses. Mind you, I was the one who made that person smart. I never really cared much about the business and making money as a mule cause half the time after the trips, he wouldn't pay me what was due. Instead, he'd beat me, beat me for because I bought clothes **\*laughs\***. I was okay with my fraud it was what was actually putting money on the table not his business cause I was contributing most of the household expenses. It's like that man had bewitched me).

In summarising her mule work, Participant 3 claims that her husband had an almost supernatural hold on her if one believes in witchcraft. To date, Participant 3 still has a hard time describing her desire to please her husband and keep him in her life. Participant 3 surmises that this need may be as a result of her low self-esteem and her ego. She was known as a smart, streetwise person by their business associates and friends, yet she did not feel whole or complete by herself - she did not know herself outside of her marriage. Her marriage defined her; it completed the perception she wanted people to have, that she and her husband were a successful power couple.

#### **5.4.7 Current life and lifestyle**

Participant 3 currently lives in a township with her friend's mother. She and her husband are not formally divorced yet although they have been separated for 10 years. The divorce has been dragged out and acrimonious. She claims that she is unable to fight hard as she does not have money for good lawyers, whereas her husband has hired costly lawyers. Also, her husband is busy moving assets and according to her:

*"...hiding things in the children's names and trusts he set up gore ke sa kreyela selo."*  
(hiding things in the children's names and trusts he set up so that I don't get anything).

She is currently unemployed but has some plans in the pipeline. She lists her kids as the highlight of her life - they are all studying and living in London. The lowlights are her current living conditions and lack of money and employment. She wishes to one day complete her law degree.

#### **5.4.8 An analysis of causal risk and motivating factors**

An analysis of the case study above has shown that the Participant's family, her background, and upbringing, together with her romantic partner were the causal risk factors and motivations for why the Participant became a drug mule. The Participant's family instability while growing up, including her very strained relationship with her mother, and her abusive husband were the catalysts that set in motion a life of crime and deviancy. From the account, it is clear that her marriage was characterised by violence, physical and emotional abuse including manipulation and, in the end, the Participant felt unworthy and admitted to losing her dignity as she could not stand up to her husband.

Bailey (2013:132) found that amongst female drug mules, many reported that their partners' influence played a significant role in their decision to become drug mules. In the case of Participant 3, several factors came into play for her ultimately deciding to become a drug mule.

#### **5.4.9 Motives and causal risk factors**

The following were the causal risk factors and motives identified:

- **Family background and upbringing**  
→ *Emotionally unavailable mother, unstable family environment*

Farrington (2010:211) postulates that children separated from a parent or their parents are more likely to commit crime than children who have not been. This is clear in the case of Participant 3. The Participant found the death of her father hard to deal with, to which Farrington (2010:212) adds that the loss of a parent creates trauma in children which may have a damaging effect because of attachment. Moreover, Participant 3 had a very distant, almost non-existent relationship with her mother.

Sumter et al. (2017:11) found that a stressful childhood usually serves as a mitigating factor in a person's involvement in drug trafficking. Undeniably, after the passing of her father, Participant 3 claims to have had a tough time with his family resulting in her being emotionally abused by them. Farrington (2010:203) confirms that moderately strong predictors of adult criminality are family background, minority race, poor parent-child relations - including lack of supervision -, low parental involvement, low parental warmth, large family size and other factors. All the above elements are present in the case of Participant 3. The Participant did not have a good relationship with her mother due to her being away and not present in her life. The Participant spoke about how her mother was emotionally detached, which she still is at present. The Participant avers that her mother was cold and had no time for her. Furthermore, Participant 3 spoke of how the passing of her father created a divided family, which resulted in an unstable family environment.

- **Romantic partner, family, and friends**

- *Criminal family, criminal spouse,*

When discussing criminal spouses, Monsbakken, Lyngstad and Skarðhamar (2012:8) postulate that marrying a spouse inclined to commit crime makes it likely for a person to continue their involvement in networks and lifestyles of deviancy, and may even increase the likelihood of committing a crime. Such is the case for Participant 3 - she admitted to having been a fraudster when she met her husband, however as their marriage progressed, she became more fully involved in their drug business over and above her involvement in bank fraud. After the death of her father, she lived with extended family that were local fraudsters who introduced her to fraud. The Participant states that her introduction into crime was 'normal' and that it was not seen as some clandestine occurrence as the whole family was involved to some degree. From the case study, it is clear that the Participant's socialisation took place in a pro-criminal environment. Participant 3 admitted that the family only ever accepted her when she supported their illegal means after her father's death.

- **Victimisation**

- *Emotional dependence, emotional and physical abuse*

Participant 3 married a drug dealer who was abusive, manipulative, and controlling. Bailey (2013:122) avers that when women get involved in drug smuggling activities, it

is usually due to victimisation. This can be seen where the Participant relays how her husband always pitted her against his mistress, comparing them and often making her feel unworthy and unloved. Depending on which way one chooses to read Participant 3's story, she could also be viewed as a victim. A victim in a sense that from her adolescent years, the Participant felt the need to please those around her consistently. The need to please included her partaking in a criminal lifestyle. In this particular case study, victimisation of the Participant occurred mainly through her emotional dependence on her husband as well as his emotional and physically abusive ways.

#### **5.4.10 Criminological explanation**

From the case study, criminological explanations for Participant 3's behaviour can be linked to the following:

- *Neutralisation theory*

On examining the Participant's narrative about her motivation for becoming a drug mule, the Neutralization Theory seemed to be the best explanation for what motivated the Participant to become a drug mule. The theory posits that people are not completely good, nor are they completely bad. The main idea of the Neutralization Theory is that people drift between good behaviour or bad behaviour by neutralising it and making it seem like it is not that serious (Tibbetts & Hemmens, 2010:448).

In summary, the Neutralization Theory posits that people justify their behaviour through offsetting it against something, and in other words minimising its seriousness. The Participant justified being a drug mule by stating that her husband pressured her into it as he was physically and emotionally abusive but admitting that she was also emotionally dependent on him. The Participant's behaviour can be explained through the use of techniques of neutralisation as identified by Matza and Sykes (1957). These neutralisation techniques are typically used by people to explain to themselves why it is fine to have done the wrong thing. This theory was developed according to four observations of juvenile delinquent behaviour (Kaptein & van Helvoort, 2019:1260), and the following was noted:

- The experience of guilt or shame after committing a crime: the Participant did admit to feeling guilty about being a drug mule mainly because she was abusing

her diplomatic position and possibly endangering her children whom she would sometimes travel with when she was carrying drugs.

- Some respect and admiration showed towards law-abiding people thus showing that they were cognisant to lawful societal norms: this was evidenced in the fact that the Participant had a full-time job working for a respected foreign body, which shows her admiration and awareness to being a law-abiding citizen.
- Certain groups will neither be victimised or harmed such as friends, family, relatives; signifying a sort of value structure within their particular group: this aspect is hugely evident in the Participant's narrative as she claimed that even when she was operating as a fraudster, her primary motivation was to take care of her family and loved ones. The Participant almost came across as justifying her involvement in a crime as she viewed herself as the family matriarch and saviour.
- It is not likely that offenders are exempt from established societal influences, that said, people still generally accept and agree with law-abiding behaviour: this was admitted by the Participant who has always acknowledged her role in crime yet felt that what her husband was asking her to do was unconscionable even though she agreed to be a drug mule regardless.

Tibbetts and Hemmens (2010:448) listed five techniques of neutralisation which people use to justify their actions and shift blame from themselves; namely denial of responsibility, denial of injury, denial of victim, condemnation of the condemners and appeal to higher loyalties. The Participant did not deny the fact that being a drug mule was wrong, especially because she was working for a corporation that afforded her diplomatic status, which in itself was a breach of trust. Using the techniques of neutralisation, the Participant justified her behaviour by denial of responsibility, claiming that her husband coerced her into being a mule. She cites her emotional dependence and also her husband's abusive behaviour as one of the reasons she agreed to be a mule. When asked about what motivated her to be a mule; as part of her response, she explained that she never wanted to do it, but her husband was manipulative:

*"...I was okay with my fraud it was what was actually putting money on the table not his business cause I was contributing most of the household expenses. Nkare obuti o*

*le na ntoyile.*” (I was okay with my fraud it was what was actually putting money on the table not his business cause I was contributing most of the household expenses. It’s like that man had bewitched me.”

This is a classic example of denial of responsibility, in that she takes no responsibility and outright blames her husband for her actions, even though she was already involved in crime as a fraudster.

While Participant 3 acknowledges that being a mule was wrong especially given her diplomatic status, the fact that she was not caught and she did not cause any embarrassment for her employer, shows her denial of injury. Instead, she sees herself as the victim in some way. In the case of this Participant, there is no victim to speak of except herself in the way her husband treated her. She explains what happened after her transit scare and successfully landing in Ireland as follows:

*“...the way ne ke tshohile ka teng ne, ha ke filtha ko ausaka ka no tlhobola dilo tsele ka di lathlela mofatshe, ka re waitse keng masepa a motho o le o batlile a mpolaisa. Nagana nkabe ke tshwerwe? Bana baka? A zanke ka lla byana mo bophelong.”* (The way I was so scared neh, when I arrived at my sisters, I just took off the stuff and threw it on the floor and I said this sh\*t of a person almost got me in trouble. Imagine I had been caught? My kids? I’ve never cried so much in my life.”)

This clearly shows that the Participant always felt she was the victim in this situation.

The other neutralisation technique the Participant uses is the condemnation of the condemner; in that, she has almost abdicated all her responsibility in choosing to be a mule to her husband, who was the bad one. The statement she made about him highlighted their relationship dynamics of ‘good girl bad guy’ when she said:

*“Hape o tlhalefisitswe ke nna mothola. I never really cared much about the business and making money as a mule cause half the time after the trips, he wouldn’t pay me what was due.”* (Mind you, I was the one who made that person smart. I never really cared much about the business and making money as a mule cause half the time after the trips, he wouldn’t pay me what was due.)

The overarching theme throughout the whole interview was that her husband’s treatment of her is a justification for her behaviour. In other words, she excuses herself



from responsibility by pointing fingers at him and his abusive nature towards her because she did not need to be a mule; she was always bright and self-sufficient.

The final neutralisation technique, namely appealing to higher loyalty, did not appear to be present in this instance. That does not mean that the technique of neutralisation is not applicable. In this instance, it is clear that the techniques of neutralisation helped her to validate her deviancy where being a drug mule is concerned. Interestingly, although the Participant owned her narrative of being involved in fraud, she would not do so for being a drug mule. This perhaps speaks to the general assumption in the drug world that mules are generally seen as mere bottom feeders; people who are inconsequential in the bigger scheme of things.

Concisely, the Neutralization Theory's overarching statement is that people will nullify or neutralise established norms and values making excuses that make it easier for them to drift into crime (Siegel, 2011:178). The offenders could make these excuses themselves or via family members who try and rationalise illegal behaviour. This underscores that even though the techniques of neutralisation cannot fully explain drug mule motives, they show some methods that drug mules use in order to justify why they are drug mules; thus, in essence, rationalising the illegality of their behaviour.

## **5.5 CASE STUDY 4**

### **5.5.1 Biographical information**

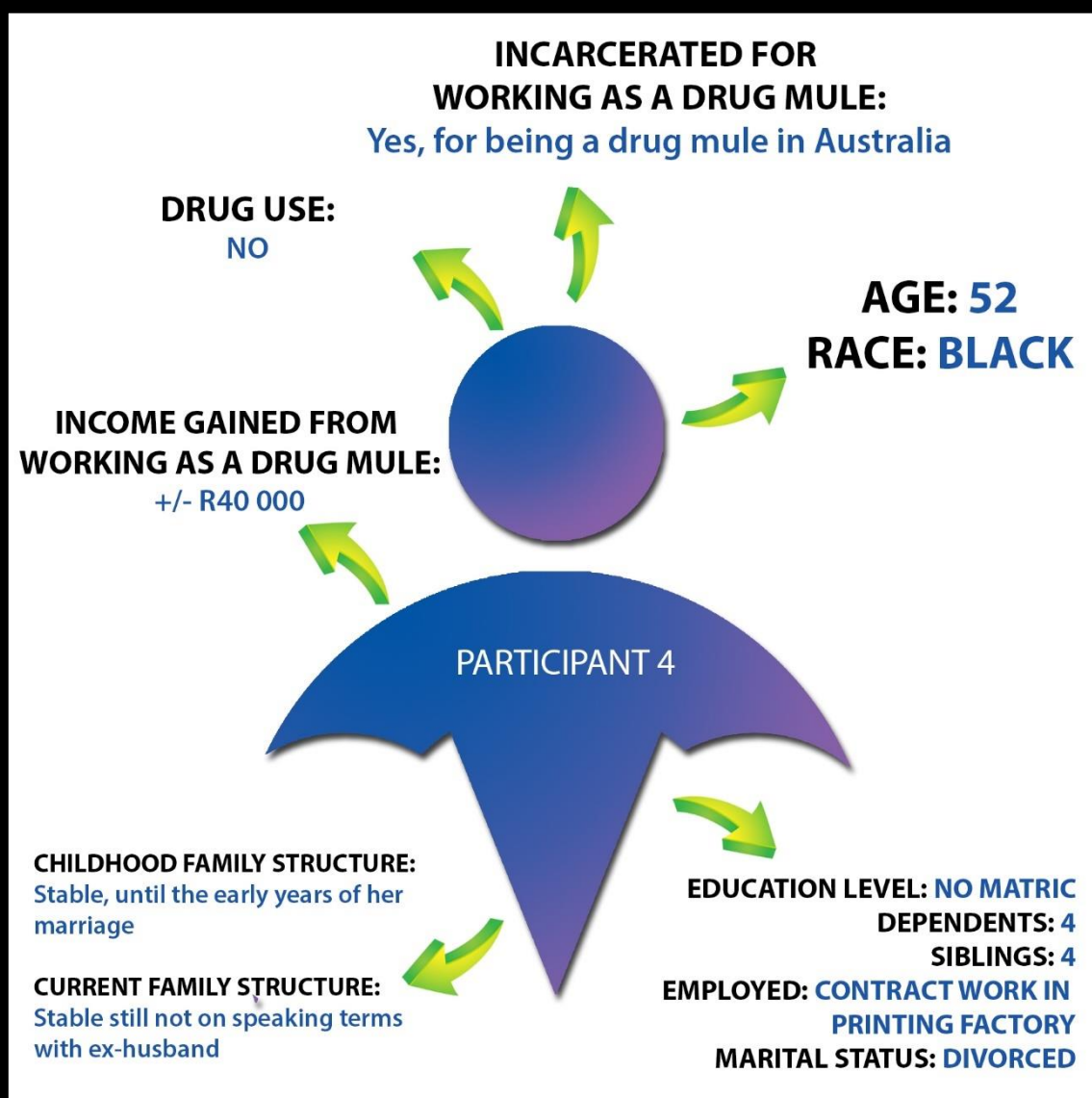
As shown below, Participant number 4 is a black woman and fifty-two years of age. She was born and raised in Soweto and is one of six children. The Participant was raised in a loving, stable home. Although she had a normal childhood, she did not complete her schooling and fell pregnant when she was nineteen years old. When she fell pregnant, her mother told her she must take time off to take care of her child. Back then in most families, it was the norm as usually, one parent was working, and people had no domestic workers. The Participant said this:

*“uyazi mos, amantambozana be ba ngena chance niks, wa mita nje uyeka iskola uzigadele umntwana wakho be se phezu kwa loko fanele u clean-e, upheke, ngoba wena angithi uwumfazi manje.”* (You know mos, girls didn't have a chance at all, you

just fall pregnant, you must leave school and take care of your own child, then on top of that you must clean and cook because you decided to be a woman).

She is currently divorced with four children. She and her ex-husband are estranged and seldom talk. She is currently temporarily employed and lives in the family house in Soweto with her brother and his family.

**FIGURE 5: DEMOGRAPHICS PARTICIPANT 4**



### 5.5.2 Family background and childhood

Participant 4 was born and bred in Soweto, as one of six children, two girls and four boys. She is the fifth child. She is fifty-two years old. The Participant admits to growing up in a warm, loving home, with both parents:

*“Bekumnandi njani, be si tight.”* (It was so nice, we were tight).

Her parents are both deceased, as is her elder brother. She was well-loved and happy, although they were not a wealthy family. She does state that while growing up, she and her older sister did not get along at all. The Participant elaborated that they grew up in a patriarchal but loving home. Since she and her sister were the only two girls, they were expected to help their mother carry the load of cleaning and cooking for the family. This contributed to their clashes as there would often be fights between them over whose turn it was to wash the dishes or clean the kitchen and so forth.

Moreover, there was some sibling rivalry borne of the fact that her sister felt that the Participant was getting preferential treatment from the parents because she was younger than her. Participant 4 surmises the relationship as follows:

*“Be singazwane nje angazi why. Be silwela yonke into! izimpahla, u ku clean-a izinto, e zinjalo nje. Be singashayane mara be kuno mona nje. Plus, ngoba be ngimcane kuye, u **\*name withheld\*** u be vele angiphelele intliziyo, kodwa it wasn't into le e yiyo manje.”* (We just didn't get along; I don't know why. We would fight about everything! Clothes about cleaning things, just things like that. We would not hit each other, but there was some envy. Plus, because I was younger than her, **\*name withheld\*** would just get annoyed by me, but it wasn't what it is now.)

The Participant added that because of the patriarchal nature of how they were raised, they were still lucky that some of her brothers were naturally hard workers and very clean so they would often assist with the cleaning, washing of clothes and general upkeep of the yard. The Participant, however, stressed that she considered it lucky as her brothers were under no obligation to do so. The Participant attended school but did not get to complete her matric because she fell pregnant. As expected, she had to take full responsibility for her child which meant she had to drop out of school while her boyfriend (later husband) carried on with his schooling. The Participant admits that she was a little bit precocious leading to her often being chided for her involvement

with boys, but despite this, she still maintains that hers was just an ordinary working-class township family. There are no significant experiences that she can think of growing up except falling pregnant while at school in 1995 and her discordant relationship with her sister.

### 5.5.3 Adulthood

When she told her parents she was pregnant, they insisted that she take a gap year and take care of her child. At the time she claims that she and her boyfriend were “*very much in love, we were young then, siyenza yonke into sonke*” (*Very much in love then, we were young then, we did everything together*), so he pressured her to get married, when she was nineteen, and he was twenty-three, and he had completed school. She argues that he is the one who urged her to leave school saying:

“*angifuni mfazi o zo qcoka i-gym dress, hlala endlini ngizokunakekela.*” (I don’t want a wife who wears a school uniform, stay home and I’ll take care of you).

She left school, they married, and she became a homemaker, they had four children together. The Participant does, however, state that her mother, “*ubengekho right nje nga lo muntu, kodwa ke.*” (my mother was not okay about that person, but anyway).

The Participant was married for sixteen years, and she says the first eight years were blissful, and they were happy. Everything started changing after the 8<sup>th</sup> year of marriage, when she claims her husband suddenly became abusive, was always out with his girlfriends, sometimes leaving for the whole weekend whereabouts unknown. When he eventually returned, he would be belligerent and abusive. If she asked where he had been, it would lead to a fight, and she’d be told:

“*kuno kudla, kuno gesi, kune mali, so yini iproblem? Yeka ukuphapha ungiyeke.*” (there’s food, there’s electricity, there’s money so what’s your problem? Stop being forward and leave me alone).

She says after this, some sort of argument or fight would always ensue and that their physical fights would happen in front of the children. She declares:

“*ube ngi treat-a kabi kanjani, angazi kuchenche ini ngoba bengizihlalela endlini na bantwana bam.*” *Ngizobe ngikutshela amanga mangithi ngiyazi, that’s why after sixteen years ngivele nga hamba, nga nyamalala leskathi a ye a macherini azange ngabuyela*

*ngaya ekhaya.*” (He used to treat me so bad, I don’t know what changed cause I used to always be indoors with my kids. I’d be lying if I said I knew, that is why after sixteen years I decided to up and leave, I just disappeared some other time when he was away with his mistress and never went back, I went home)

#### **5.5.4 Introduction to mule work**

After a tough divorce, her ex-husband took the three oldest children, and she remained behind back at her family home with the youngest child who was still a toddler. The Participant claims that the ex-husband then abducted the toddler after eight months of estrangement. He took the child from the neighbours’ house where the child was playing; under the guise that he was going to buy him some takeaway food, but instead, he took him out of the country. The lady who was watching the children did not make much of it as she knew the father and the child did not seem to be distressed, leaving with him. The Participant was distraught and angry, and when she finally spoke to the ex-husband, he gleefully bragged that she would never see her children again unless she visited them. When the abduction happened, it had been two years since she had last seen the other three children. To make matters worse, soon after that, he went and closed the bank account that he had opened for her and justified it by saying that he was taking care of the kids, so he had no reason to maintain her financially.

She talks about a time when she could not even afford cell phone airtime to call her children. Due to the fact, the children were in a neighbouring country; it meant that the call charges were higher than normal so she could not call often nor could she speak to them for long whenever she was able to call. Add to that; their father consistently made it difficult for her to speak to or see them. He would randomly change their phone numbers and not tell her, so at some point, she could go for five months without any contact. The Participant was unemployed, fell into depression, and with no income, she decided to go and live with her sister for a while as her brother had recently married and was living in the family home with his new wife and young family.

She recalls a particular incident that she says for her, was the deciding factor for her decision to become a mule:

*“Nga founela a bantwana bam’, umamkhulu wabo wa ngitshela ukuthi a bekho, kodwa bengibezwa be khuluma e muva. Wangitshela ukuthi the best way ukusolva lento, u kuzo vakasha. Ku le so stress, i-ex-husband yam’ yathi ngi yi nja, a ngina mali, ngi useless angeke ngi lunge, **net leyo nto nje**, ya ngihlanyisa, ngapha ngikhalela abantwana bam’, ngapha uyangithuka, ngazitshela nje lapho ukuthi ngi zombonisa.”* (I called my kids, their aunt told me that they are not there, meanwhile I could hear them talking in the background. She said the best way to end this is for me to visit the kids. Amidst all that stress, my ex-husband said I’m just a dog, I don’t have money, I’m useless, I won’t come right, **just those utterances** made me lose my mind because on the one hand I’m crying for my kids, on the other my ex is busy swearing at me. I told myself right there and then, that I’ll show him!).

That was when the Participant decided to take alternative routes in order to make money.

She lived in another part of Soweto for a while with her sister, who supported her financially. Her sister was upwardly mobile, full of life and seemingly flush with money all the time. Because they were living in the same house, she became more curious about where the money came from. She asked her sister what she did for a living as it was previously never discussed. Her sister told her about the nature of her work as a drug mule, and in return, she told her sister that she too would like to partake. She admits that she was a bit unsure at first due to the illegality of it but her sister reassured her, and with no prospect of employment, the situation with her kids and an unfinished education, she felt she had no other option. When probed as to previous criminality before acting as a drug mule, the Participant states:

*“angina niks in my name, angaze nje ngi cabange izonto ezi snaaks.”* (I’ve got nothing associated to my name, I’d never thought of being involved in any shenanigans).

### **5.5.5 Mule work**

Participant 4 was introduced to be a mule by her sister, who herself was already an experienced mule. In essence, her sister was her handler as she only ever dealt with her. She admits that her sister was living with a Nigerian man at the time whom she worked with, and the sister claimed they were married although there were no formalities. She was asked to deliver drugs in Botswana for her maiden-trip as a mule.

The trip was completed successfully, and she was paid an amount of R 5000. After completing two trips, the first in Botswana and the second in Zimbabwe, she had some money and was able to visit her kids.

The Participant was then sent on a trip to Sydney, Australia, (her second trip to Australia and her third trip as a drug mule) but she never made it back as she was arrested at the airport. Upon reflection she states:

*“Yazi neh, bengasi right nje le lo langa. Angazi bengiphetwe yini mara nje umoya wam’ nje be u ngasi right. Before ngi hamba ngiye ngaphupa no mamam’ a thi ungikhumbulile ngi nga hambi, uyeza uzo ngibona but nga hamba nje ku njalo ngoba a ma arrangement be se a yenziwa. Kanti ngi yo boshwa, yhuuu!”* (You now neh, I was just not right that day. I don’t know what was wrong with me, but my spirit was not right. Before I left, I dreamt of my mother, and she said to me she misses me, I mustn’t go she’s coming to visit me, but I left just like that as the arrangements had already been made. Meanwhile, I’m going to be arrested, yhuuuu!)

When questioned whether she was set up by her sister, the Participant had this to say:

*“I don’t think so yazi, ijob nga banjwa. Ngiyithata ka njalo. Be ngi myenzela imali, be ngi nga hluphi, ukungazwane kwami naye kuphuma from sisa khula, so I don’t think a nga ngiboshisela ukuthi a si zwane.”* (I don’t think, so you know, a job is a job I got caught. That’s how I take it. I was making her money, I wasn’t bothersome, my not getting along with her started from when we were growing up, so I don’t think she can have me arrested because we didn’t get along).

Participant 4 was arrested at the Sydney Airport at the beginning of August 2000 whilst carrying 4 kgs of cocaine concealed in her luggage. She was charged and sentenced to serve 3 years in total. The Participant was released back to South Africa in July 2003.

### **5.5.6 Motivation for becoming a drug mule**

The Participant admitted that initially, she became a drug mule to make ends meet and to be able to go and visit with her children. After her first trip, she expressed that continuing to be a mule was an easy way to make money. It also afforded her a lot of free time which meant that she could go and visit with her children more often without

time constraints. This was essential for her as her children were not within her immediate reach being out of the country, so visiting them for more extended periods was important, and something she could not afford to do if she had a formal regulated job. She claims that despite her reasons, she was mainly motivated by money or lack thereof but admits that her sister's flashy lifestyle was enticing, saying:

*"be ku yi nice life, nini umuntu a ya travel-a, maka buya siyadla, siyaphuza, si phuma ma out, kumnandi nje one way."* (It was a nice life, as and when a person is travelling when she returns we eat, drink, go out. It was just good times, fun time always).

Participant 4 unashamedly states that regardless of the nice life, the need to go and visit her children and be able to buy them gifts was forefront on her mind.

The Participant disclosed that although her motives were initially borne out of desperation and a lack of money, they later changed and she became driven by self-empowerment and excitement accompanied by being able to provide for herself without having to work in a 'normal' work environment. Undeniably, this empowerment and excitement later gave birth to greed. She felt invincible, she was cash-flush, travelling a lot and living a carefree life. It was an exciting time and life for her, and she felt empowered. Participant 4 further pronounces that what initially started off as a 'means to an end' ended up becoming a business, or rather economic decision, until she was finally arrested.

### **5.5.7 Current life and lifestyle**

The Participant lives in a township in one of the backrooms of the family home with her brother and his family. She is currently employed on a contract in a printing company in Germiston until January 2019. Participant 4 admits that she is still slightly annoyed by the fact that her sister never paid her for her first trip to Australia, which was money she was supposedly meant to save for her. She does state though that in the bigger scheme of things it really does not matter anymore, for she has a wonderful relationship with her children, she is happy and content with her life even though *"angina niks"* (I don't have much).



Participant 4 remains estranged from her sister and they haven't spoken to each other since 2015. Participant 4 states that the relationship between her and her ex-husband is still hostile. They only speak to each other when it concerns their children or grandchildren and even then, they speak to each other through their children. When asked if she had an opportunity to make money being a mule would she do it again, Participant 4 stated categorically that she would never:

*"Whooooooooo a ngeke! Cabanga! Umuntu a sokole ka nje? No ngi happy mina nge mpilo yam' na bantwana bam'. Ngeke ngi phumele. Ngi mdala ka nje? Ha!"*  
(Whooooooooooo I won't! Imagine! After a person has struggled so much. No, I'm happy with my life with my kids. I won't manage. As old as I am? Ha!).

Participant 4 says her children are her main priority, and as long as they are fine, she too is fine.

#### **5.5.8 An analysis of motivating and causal risk factors**

An analysis of the case study highlighted criminal associations, socio-economic factors and empowerment, excitement, and lifestyle, as the causal risks and motives which contributed to Participant 4 becoming a drug mule. The Participant looked to her sister for emotional and financial support when she went through her acrimonious divorce, and in turn, the sister introduced her to be a drug mule. The Participant was also unemployed with limited employment prospects and education, which in turn made her employability options limited. Bailey (2013:121) also mentions the fact that many women who had been drug mules admitted to the fact that the strain of supporting their family was the main reason they chose to be mules. In the end though, the Participant found being a drug mule rewarding and proceeded to continue with her crime because of the seemingly high rewards without too much effort.

#### **5.5.9 Motives and causal risk factors**

The following were the causal risk factors and motives identified:

- **Criminal associations and influence**  
→ Criminal family association via her sister

Van San and Sikkens (2017:343) found a strong link between the role that families, intimate partners, friends, and social interactions play when women choose to become drug mules. Beijers, Bijleveld, van de Weijer and Liefbroer (2016:2) maintain that sibling offending can be considered as a risk factor on its own in that it increases the risk of individual offending. This is evident in the case of Participant 4, as she had never displayed any criminal proclivities whilst growing up. The main reason the Participant considered becoming a drug mule was that her sister was already a mule who seemingly made a good living. Furthermore, after asking her sister about being a mule, the Participant admits that her sister was very frank about how she made a living and did not discourage her from becoming involved.

Participant 4 and her sister are six years apart in age and were the only two girls in a family of boys. Beijers et al. (2016:3) contend that siblings who are closer in age tend to spend time together, thus mutually influencing each other. This was understandably so in the case of Participant 4 as she and her sister were the only girls in a family of boys and as such when Participant 4 was going through her divorce, it was her sister she invariably turned to for support despite their sometimes disputatious relationship.

- **Empowerment, excitement, and lifestyle**
- Empowerment, greed, the lure of easy money

Participant 4 admits that after making enough money to visit her children, her motivation changed from that of desperation to greed. The Participant shared how she was living a good life that included shopping, drinking, and partying without having to worry about money. This was evident in the results of a study conducted by Caulkins et al. (2009:84), confirming that the appeal of easy money was the most common motivation for females choosing to be drug mules. Likewise, Campbell (2008:250) mentions that for some women, empowerment and adventure were reasons given when choosing to be involved as drug mules. A similar sentiment was shared by Collins (2018:1) who proclaims that some women are motivated by money and notoriety and thus take part in criminal activities in order to obtain money to fulfil what are legitimate needs to them. Even though Participant 4 did not become a drug mule for notoriety, she did express that her decision was driven by a desire to make money and fulfil whatever needs she had.

- **Socio-economic factors**

→ Lack of education, limited employment prospects

According to Sumter et al. (2017:33), previous research indicates that marginalised women who feel disempowered may turn to drug trafficking as a means to make an income. From her having to leave school after falling pregnant and being made to stay at home to take care of the children, Participant 4 was already being disempowered. She did not complete her schooling as her husband was clear that: *“angifuni mfazi o zo gqoka i-gym dress, hlala endlini ngizokunakekela”* (I don’t want a wife who wears a school uniform, stay home and I’ll take care of you) - only to keep her at home and ill-treat her. Not completing her schooling left Participant 4 in a position that made it hard for her to find a steady, well-paying job as she was unqualified without suitable experience. Similarly, Participant 4 sought her sister’s help because of her limited education and employment prospects in order to build her self-efficacy, given her failed marriage and her inability to be involved in her children’s life.

#### **5.5.10 Criminological explanation**

From the case study, criminological explanations for Participant 4’s behaviour can be linked to the following theory:

- *Merton’s Theory of Anomie*

The Participant’s decision to become a drug mule could be explained using Merton’s Theory of Anomie developed in 1938. This Theory associate’s crime to lack of opportunity and equality that originates from a person’s social environment. From Participant 4’s case study, Merton’s Theory of Anomie was well substantiated. Participant 4 was introduced to mule work after asking her sister what she did for a living. Participant 4 elected to work as a drug mule because she was struggling to make ends meet, and in order to see her children whom her husband had abducted after their divorce. Seeing her sister’s seemingly successful lifestyle was some form of reassurance that she would also live a good life without financial worries. However, she did stress that initially, it was because she had limited access to legitimate work, being uneducated and having no prior work experience as she was a homemaker whilst she was married. The Participant’s decision to drug mule was a ‘quick fix.’ She

needed money urgently in order to be able to access her children and improve her living circumstances, and this, in turn, put her under enormous pressure.

The Participant had limited legitimate means to make money because of lack of experience and education, and she chose the illegal way to make money. Frustration is emphasised as an element that causes people to commit a crime in strain theories (Tibbetts & Hemmens, 2010:323). Merton's Theory of Anomie implies that there are various ways in which people can deal with strain and stress and that some may choose deviance as a solution to dealing with the stress. Participant 4 repeatedly spoke about her frustration about the situation she found herself in; being without money, and unemployed and as a result unable to see her children.

From the case study, it is clear that there was a gap between what the Participant wanted to achieve financially for herself and her children, and the situation she found herself in - being uneducated and unemployed. This caused her great strain and she mentioned often feeling depressed and worthless stating:

*"the way bengikhumbule a bantwana bam' bengigula. Be ngihlala ngi lele nje, ngi nga funi niks. Na la ma togo be wa nceda nje for ugwayi no tshwala but otherwise imali yakhona be yi nga yenzi lutho, ngiye nga pathwa yi depression."* (The way I missed my children, I was sick. I was always sleeping, I wanted nothing. Even the piece jobs were helpful for cigarettes and alcohol, but otherwise the money didn't do anything I even had depression).

According to Tibbetts and Hemmens (2010:326), there are five modes of adapting to strain, namely: conformity; ritualism; innovation; retreatism and rebellion. In order to conform, the Participant could have completed her schooling, furthered her tertiary education, and looked for a suitable job. Another way a person can respond is by ritualism which means that a person does not conform to societal norms, accepting that they will not succeed within those confines but still continues to do as expected – in this case meaning that the Participant was expected to continue with the 'piece jobs' and seek alternative employment despite the fact that she would not make enough money to support herself let alone her children. Retreatism involves rejecting all the goals that have been set and the means of achieving those goals. Rebellion, like retreatism involves rejecting all the goals and means but finding new goals and

resources to obtain them. Lastly, innovation is acknowledging and accepting the goals set by society but introducing new ways of obtaining the goals that society does not approve of. This is exactly what the Participant opted to do in order to deal with her circumstances.

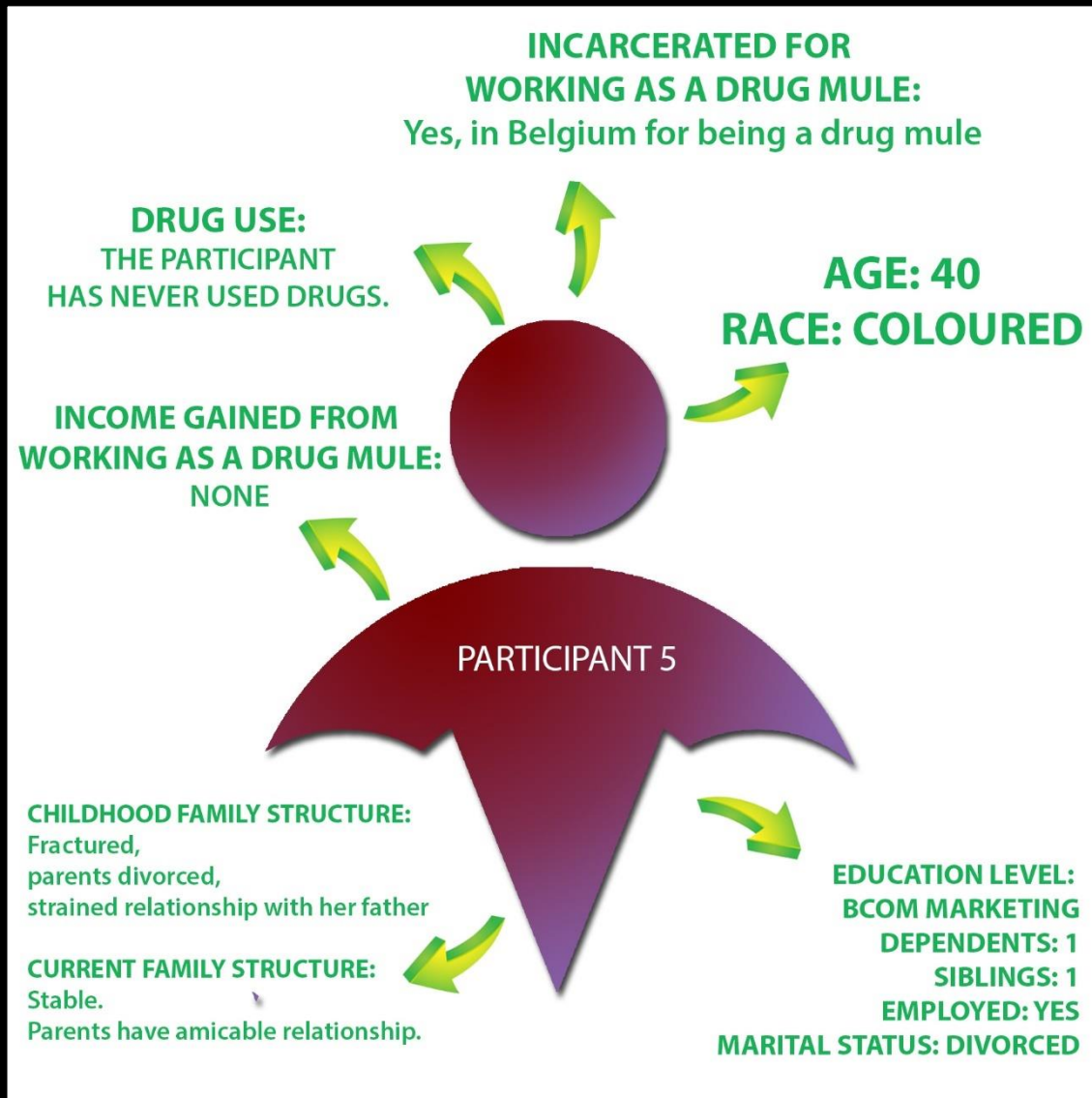
This particular Theory was initially developed based on official statistics that showed that crime for material or financial gain was primarily committed by people from lower social classes. Furthermore, the Theory argued that where there was an imbalance between goals and the means to bring about those goals, anomie would occur. This was the case with the Participant. The Participant's main goal was to be reunited and have access to her children, however she did not have the means to achieve that goal, the situation was stressful to her, and she turned to crime. Further, Participant 4 measured success by the material success her sister had from being a mule which meant she would do whatever it took to achieve the same.

## **5.6 CASE STUDY 5**

### **5.6.1 Biographical details**

Participant five is forty years old, coloured woman, born and raised in Johannesburg. She is the firstborn of 2 children, and her parents divorced when she was eleven years old. She has a younger brother who is thirty-eight years old from her parent's marriage. Participant 5 states that her father never remarried after his divorce from her mother but fathered children with various women. The Participant cannot be sure just how many other children her father has, merely stating 'too many' and those are only the half brothers and sisters she's heard about from her father. If rumours are acknowledged there are apparently many more children that her father has never acknowledged. Participant 5 completed secondary schooling and has an undergraduate degree. She is divorced, with one child to whom she is the primary caregiver. She is employed in a management position in a well-known company in Johannesburg.

**FIGURE 6: DEMOGRAPHICS: PARTICIPANT 5**



### **5.6.2 Family background and childhood**

The Participant admits to having had a reasonably good upbringing if her parent's turbulent marriage is not taken into account. The Participants' facial expression and uncomfortable body language did not match what she expressed regarding a good upbringing, so upon further probing, she pointed out that:

*“...we were a bit unhappy emotionally, always scared of our dad but we were taken care of very well, we were very privileged kids, we didn’t lack so I guess comparatively, that qualifies as a good upbringing right?”*

She says her father was a hard man, feared around the area they lived and very strict. He was also very controlling and would sometimes beat her mother severely just because she took too long doing something he asked, or if he didn’t like how she was dressed. The Participant states:

*“We were frightened of my dad. My brother and I didn’t have a fatherly relationship with him because we feared him. He was just a provider, he barked instructions, he dictated, and it had to be done. We were petrified of him, boarding school saved us.”*

Participant 5 alluded to the fact that her parents were wealthy, successful businesspeople who owned shops in a small town not far from their hometown. It was expected of them to go and work at the shops during the school holidays. The father also owned a fleet of long-distance buses and taxis. They attended exclusive private schools and were boarders as their mother felt it would protect them from witnessing the abuse at home. The Participant describes boarding school as:

*“...the bestest time of my life”. I was free, and away from home, I didn’t feel stifled and anxious as I was at home.”*

The Participant divulges that she developed an attitude where she was often belligerent and quick to *“buck the system.”* She acknowledges that her cheeky and rebellious nature caused her expulsion from various schools. Luckily for her, she says:

*“...back then the cheque book mattered, so schools had no problem accepting me after expulsion as my folks would pay fees for the year in advance.”*

She claims to have been expelled from more than six schools, for petty offences:

*“...nothing that would warrant expulsion in this day and age cause everyone is so woke and social media keeps things in check, back then there was no social media hype.”*

The Participant goes on to say her younger brother was no better, and he was a brawler and had anger issues, and so he got expelled twice, both times for fighting.

Her parents divorced when Participant 5 was eleven years old, and the divorce was hostile and bitter to a point where her mother decided to abandon spousal support and

custody as she wanted to get out of the marriage at any cost. The Participant completed high school and never lived at home after that; she states:

*“After I completed school, I never looked back, home was not an option except for that mandatory Christmas visit and stuff, I stayed at res, and when I started working I moved into a townhouse in Sandton with my boyfriend at that time.”*

The Participant enrolled in university to study towards a BCom degree in marketing. She deferred her studies twice and finally completed her degree 8 years after her matriculation. Her brother did not complete school, as he ran away from the last school he attended and never went back.

The Participant says that her severed relationship with her father was a catalyst to many choices she made. The Participant recalls how her father controlled everyone and everything with his money. She goes on:

*“Anytime he was unhappy about something he would stop supporting you financially, he would cut off all communication and completely blank you. There was a stage where we didn’t talk for two years; he just didn’t talk to me; he just didn’t acknowledge my existence. Like at all. From that, I learnt to stand on my own, pave my own way and I made sure I never asked him for anything, I’d rather starve.”*

Those relationship dynamics caused the Participant to always look after herself first and *“fend for herself.”* The lack of emotional support caused her to make decisions that lacked guidance.

### **5.6.3 Adulthood**

After deferring her university studies, the Participant worked as a call centre agent for a while before leaving to work for an advertising agency. She had broken up with her boyfriend and moved into her own townhouse. Participant 5 says that she and a group of her childhood friends were party girls and were often out at clubs. She lived a carefree life until she was arrested as a drug mule. Upon reflection about her adulthood, she says the following:

*“...my adulthood was really divided into two parts, before Belgium and after Belgium. I was a completely different person before and another one after but the before Belgium adult was happy, carefree and living life!”*



The Participant adds that she was arrested shortly after her twenty-first birthday, so she really had just entered adulthood. Much of her adulthood happened after she was released from prison. The Participant was sentenced to 2 years for drug trafficking, she served the full sentence and was released into the custody of DIRCO who then put her on a flight back to South Africa where she was reunited with her family.

#### **5.6.4 Introduction to drug muling work**

The Participant was recruited by a close friend at that time who was also a work colleague. In fact, the Participant states that oddly enough, it was the friend who was initially recruited to smuggle drugs to Belgium by her Nigerian friends. She shared this with the Participant and suggested that they both go together so they could make some money. The Participant agreed, assuming that they would be smuggling marijuana. At the time of her involvement, the Participant had been working for an advertising company. She was part of the team that was in charge of client budgets and allocations, and she admits that from time to time she would manipulate information so that she would make some extra money for herself over and above her salary.

Participant 5 acknowledges the major role her friend played in her involvement as a mule. Her friend was recruited by her Nigerian friends who asked her to do them a small favour. The Participant states that she knew the Nigerian men and that she and her friend would sometimes meet with them socially. The Participant gives details of the conversation as follows:

*“Look I knew those guys, I had partied with them and this chick before, they were big spenders always paying for lunches and drinks. When this bitch explained what these guys had asked her, I was ok with-it truth be told. I just decided without giving it much thought because there was money involved, **R 15 000 A LOUSY R 15 000**, I cringe every time I think about that, but then I justify it by saying that it’s more than double what I was making monthly back then so yeah, anyway.. and a free holiday, pocket money, time off work. Look ya no, you didn’t have to ask me twice. Also, my arrogance made it easier to agree because I assumed, I would never be caught. According to my thought process, ‘my kind’ didn’t get stopped and searched for drugs. I was too well*

*travelled and had grown up rich. I didn't fit the stereotype I had created about drug mules being poor."*

### **5.6.5 Mule work**

After agreeing to the job, the Participant and her friend were taken to a townhouse in Fourways. They were coached on how to act, what to answer at the airport and fitted with the drugs to make sure that they were comfortable. They were given a travel date in advance so that they could request leave from work. The Participant explained how on the day of the travel, she was restless, unsettled and lamented the fact that she did not follow her intuition. The Participant explains that when they left for ORTIA she was dreadfully late as they had stayed out all night drinking the day before. So, on the day of travel, nothing seemed to go well. At first, the medications she had been taking for her gastroenteritis had run out, and the pharmacy did not have stock, secondly, the geyser in her townhouse had burst, so she had to fix it. The result of all of this was her and her friend being very late to the airport which resulted in them missing the flight. The Participant further states that she was so hungover and feeling very sick to the point that the airport staff actually let them use the staff exits to leave the airport rather than go through the standard procedure of leaving the airport from the immigration section. She laughs when she retells the story saying:

*"I was finished; I was what they call hemp af! Like drunk to a point of taking my shirt off! I was so hungover I felt like I was still drunk. We walked into the airport, went through immigration with no issues but once inside I felt so sick that I had to go and vomit. This made us miss our flight. This other one was not any better, and she kept on laughing as she found the whole scene funny! We went to one of the airport staff and asked them to let us on the flight, and they told us no as all doors were now closed. The ground staff member saw that I was not 100% so she offered to take me to their sickbay. I baulked at the idea because that meant I'd have to be examined and I had stuff on me! Imagine! Haaa! So, she and another lady asked who could come pick us up, my friend then said we came by maxi taxi. We sat in a little office looking over the immigration stations where I was offered water. Once I felt better, they escorted us out of the airport via backdoors and staff entrances treating me with so much care like I was a fragile person only back at the ranch I'm carrying drugs and suffering from a bad hangover. Oiy! The irony."*

After missing their flight, the Participant's travel bookings were changed, and another date scheduled. This is where she says the story changed. Due to the fact that the tickets had to be re-booked, the drug dealers told them that they were unable to book them on the same flight as all flights were full. This meant that Participant 5 had to take a flight on a different airline which left 8 hours earlier than her friend's flight. The Participant says she did not make much of it as the first time they had missed a flight they were booked on together. She uses the latter to refute any allegation that her friend had set her up. However, the fact that her friend missed the second flight after being scolded by the drug dealers for missing the first flight, makes her wonder whether it could have been a setup. She says she can never be sure and would rather not be sure than deal with the betrayal outright.

Participant 5 insists that she does not have any meaningful memories about her incarceration except the significant occasion of being arrested at Brussels Airport. She explains it as follows:

*"I was uneasy getting off the plane for some odd reason; I kept on thinking about my friend and whether she was on the other flight. I was very unsure of myself and not my usual confident self. Also, I was still tired and genuinely not well. After being asked to step aside by immigration immediately after my passport had been stamped, my heart almost stopped beating. I had a feeling of foreboding, for some odd reason I knew it was over, I resigned myself to this fact and told the truth immediately when they started questioning me."*

What started off as an 'innocuous' easy way to make money ended up being a life-changing event. The Participant states categorically that when she offered her services along with her friend, it was just to make easy money:

*"I was broke, restless and yearned for a mini-break. This trip would solve all those problems in one go. I never ever thought twice about the gravity of my decision, I was used to travelling, I grew up with money, so for me, this was just a little 'fun' adventure that would have me paid big time never did it cross my mind that I would be suspect when travelling. I guess my arrogance failed me **\*laughs loudly\***."*

The Participant maintains that the time in prison helped her immensely. It really was an unfortunate blessing in disguise. She explains it like this:

*“This is what I was telling you earlier, the beginning of the second part of my adulthood. When I say unfortunate blessing, I mean that it took me losing my freedom to find myself, I was living a very fast life. VERY! If I had not been arrested, I shudder to think what would have happened to me in Jozi. There were times I would come back from the club and have no recollection of how I got home and when I wake up and go and look my car keys would be in the ignition, and my handbag would be lying on the front seat, car unlocked. The unfortunate part is what I put my family through. My mum had to refinance her home, borrow money from people and all sorts for my legal bills; she had a very hard time. My dad was so angry he wanted no part of it, my mum was on her own. But funny thing is that he almost burnt the whole of Johannesburg trying to find the Nigerians. I heard that some hectic stuff happened, people were pointed with guns, beaten and all that jazz. We have never spoken about it. The blessing was that I found myself, I straightened out my life after I came back and really just towed the line. I didn’t speak to that b\*tch after I came back and I never will because when I was arrested, she refused to help my parents claiming she knew nothing of what I was doing. Just imagine! That was the least she could do, the absolute least but she chose not to, so f\*ck her. If anything, THAT is what makes me unable to ever forgive her. I take ownership of my behaviour but her choosing self-preservation over helping my family. Ya f\*ck her.”*

#### **5.6.6 Motivation for becoming a drug mule**

When Participant 5 was asked what motivated her to become a drug mule, she could not categorically state what really motivated her back then as she says the money they were going to be paid was not much (R 15 000) as she mentioned above. Nevertheless, when asked to answer, she stated:

*“...Look, we were young and carefree, we lived a very fast life when **\*name withheld\*** told me about this, I volunteered to go with her, after our job we were going to hang around for a couple more days in Belgium and have ourselves a party with our payment money, for us it was that simple. I was bored at work; this one-week job would offer us some excitement and a nice time overseas, so why not? Remember that time I was earning little also, about R 6 800 take home so 15k was a little bit more than double my monthly salary, tax-free plus it came with a free holiday **\*laughs loudly\***.”*

What comes through from the interview with the Participant is that, the essence of what motivated her to become a drug mule points towards the lure of easy money.

Even though the prospect of a holiday and partying in Belgium were part of the lure, the Participant acknowledges that the prospect of making double her monthly salary in one week was the biggest drawcard to her becoming a drug mule.

#### **5.6.7 Current life and lifestyle**

Participant 5 currently lives in Johannesburg with her child, she is divorced and employed as a marketing consultant for a leading international research company. She states that she is earning enough money and living a perfect life and that she would never choose to be a drug mule again. She claims to now know better and underscores the fact that social media has created a lot of exposure to mules, so:

*“...In retrospect, I wouldn’t have done it knowing then what I know now. You get me? Like there’s too much information now for someone not to make an informed decision about something like this. I don’t know like it doesn’t make sense. Rerig,(really) one would be stupid if they chose to be a mule, ya it’s easy for me to say simply because I don’t need quick money or to travel for free as I do that a lot already.”*

She says that her relationship with her father has dramatically improved and that they get along much better now than when she was younger. She does hint that there is still a small part of her that is resentful *“for lack of a better word”* because her father did not step up when she needed him most. Nevertheless, her family is close-knit, her parents get along well, and she is happy.

#### **5.6.8 An analysis of causal risk and motivating factors**

An analysis of the case study underscores Participant 5’s family background and upbringing, her friendship circle, together with empowerment, excitement and lifestyle as some of the causal risk and motivating factors which contributed to her becoming a drug mule. The Participant related how she grew up in a strict and restrained family. Her need to break away from her restricted and controlling upbringing was one contributing factor to her involvement as a drug mule. Admittedly the love of easy money and living life in the fast lane created another self-serving motivating factor for the Participant.

### 5.6.9 Motives and causal risk factors

The following were the causal risk factors and motives identified:

- **Family background and upbringing**

- Fractured family structure, strained relationship with father, limited supervision

Sumter et al. (2017:11) report that some females chose to be drug mules in order to overcome negative childhood experiences that encompass emotional, sexual, or physical abuse. In the case of Participant 5, there was no sexual abuse, but there was physical abuse according to how the Participant recalls her childhood:

*“...my father would beat my mother something silly, and my brother and I were powerless to do anything about it as he would beat us too. When my parents divorced, my father was two extremes, extremely nice or extremely strict and harsh. We would be beaten for the slightest mistakes. I was not allowed to have boyfriends; I was not allowed to go out after five in the afternoon it was a lot. One time my father beat me for not wearing shoes. He beat me because he spent so much money buying us expensive things yet in all that I chose to walk barefoot. I had to go to the clinic; such were the belt marks on my back. To this day, I don’t walk barefoot. **Ever**. Not even in my home.”*

According to Sumter et al. (2017:11), if individuals have experienced a distressing childhood, there is a likelihood that it will serve as a mitigating factor in an individual’s involvement in drug trafficking and perhaps other crimes. Likewise, Bailey (2013:129), avows that feminist explanations of crime often link female delinquency to difficult life circumstances such as poverty, and childhood and adult abuse as women tend to break the law in order to escape their difficult life circumstances.

In addition, Participant 5 had very limited supervision in her life after leaving home. She was already living with a boyfriend whilst at university without her parents being aware. This illustrates inadequate parental supervision which in turn increased the risk of offending for Participant 5.

- **Empowerment, excitement, and lifestyle**

- The lure of easy money, love of fast life

Campbell (2008:248) postulates that female motivations are varied, from financial reasons to women seeking independence from men. Participant 5 illustrated a precociousness when narrating her story and involvement as a drug mule. There was no evidence that pointed to the Participant not being fully cognisant of the decision she was making to be a drug mule. The Participant outrightly states that her participation was mainly influenced by the desire to travel, make money, and have fun for a week in Belgium, thus ascribing complete agency to her decision to become a drug mule. From the Participant's discourse, it is essential to note that she would have most likely carried on being a drug mule had she not been apprehended. This further highlight that her personal values were strong regarding the love of the fast life and easy money. Campbell (2008:250) reiterates that female involvement in drug smuggling should not be limited to economic or subsistence reasons but must also be considered against the idea that some women may also derive thrills and excitement from engaging in drug smuggling for example.

- **Romantic partner, family, and friends**

- Friend involvement

Participant 5 confessed that had it not been for the suggestion of her friend, she would not have been involved in drugs in any way. Prior to that, the Participant was not well informed about drug mules and drug smuggling, what it entailed or the repercussions thereof:

*"I really didn't know anything about it. This b\*tch came up with the scheme, and I agreed, simple as that. I mean back then I'd heard of the Vanessa Goosen story cause that made rounds in the coloured community but more as gossip than a cautionary tale... I just wanted to go. I was happy with the R15k. My itchy feet and need to travel and go have fun far outweighed everything else. But ya if that thing didn't suggest it, I doubt I would have come up with it by myself, but you'll never know hey."*

Van San and Sikkens (2017:352) claim that friendship networks provide access to drug dealers and criminal enterprises. This is the case in Participant 5's story; her friend introduced her to be a drug mule after being recruited by her Nigerian friends who were in the drug business. This gave the dealers access to the Participant via her friendship network, in essence using someone she trusted as a recruitment strategy.

### 5.6.10 Criminological explanation for Participant 5's behaviour

From the case study, criminological explanations for Participant 5's behaviour can be linked to the following theory:

- *Rational Choice Theory*

The theoretical explanation for becoming a mule could be illustrated through the use of classical criminological theory, particularly the Rational Choice Theory. Rational Choice Theory is the work of Cornish and Clark developed in the 1980s (Piquero, 2016:423). The key premise of the Rational Choice Theory is that people behave as they please to get the most benefits out of their actions based on essential factors that are involved in a person's decision to either engage or not engage in a particular deed (Tibbetts & Hemmens, 2010:101). From the interview with Participant 5, it is clear that she has a powerful sense of identity and became independent from a young age. Having had a strained relationship with her father which was dominated by financial manipulation and physical discipline, she felt she wanted to provide for herself on her own terms to show her lack of dependence on him. The Participant was already employed when she chose to be a mule which demonstrates a sense of agency considering she did not have to make money illegally. It was an opportunistic crime. Once the Participant was presented with an opportunity the motive came about. The Participant was going to be paid more than her monthly salary for one week of 'work' with no special skills required except to have a passport.

In this case, the Participant wanted a 'free holiday' and to make extra money over and above her salary ergo she was willing to be a drug mule in order to achieve what she set out to do. According to Piquero (2016:423-424) assumptions of the Rational Choice Theory are based on the following propositions which are: committing crime is a deliberate act which ultimately aims to benefit the offender; people try to make the best decisions based on the risks and uncertainty involved; decision making will vary depending on the nature of the crime.

- ❖ committing a crime is a deliberate act which ultimately aims to benefit the offender



The Participant chose to commit crime out of her own free will; she was neither coerced nor forced. She admitted to being excited about a free holiday including being paid more than her monthly salary:

*"I was broke, restless and yearned for a mini-break. This trip would solve all those problems in one go. I never ever thought twice about the gravity of my decision, I was used to travel, I grew up with money so for me, this was just a little 'fun' adventure that would have me paid big time."*

- ❖ people try to make the best decisions based on the risks and uncertainty involved

From the interview, it was clear that the Participant did not foresee any major risks:

*".. never did it cross my mind that I would be suspect when travelling. I guess my arrogance failed me **\*laughs loudly\***."*

- ❖ decision making will vary depending on the nature of the crime.

*"Look, we were young and carefree, we lived a very fast life when **\*name withheld\*** told me about this, I volunteered to go with her, after our job we were going to hang around for a couple more days in Belgium and have ourselves a party with our payment money, for us it was that simple."*

The Participant - whether due to arrogance or misinformation - simply did not see the gravity of what she was doing.

At the end of the interview, the Participant offered further insight about having chosen to be a drug mule:

*"...In retrospect, I wouldn't have done it knowing then what I know now. You get me? Like there's too much information now for someone not to make an informed decision about something like this."*

This clearly shows that if the Participant had understood the nature of her crime, she would have made a different decision. The Rational Choice Theory is a simplified way of explaining the Participant's choices. The Participant expressed that she had unresolved issues from her past that influenced the choices she made, but that being said it remains clear from the interview that the Participant made her choice

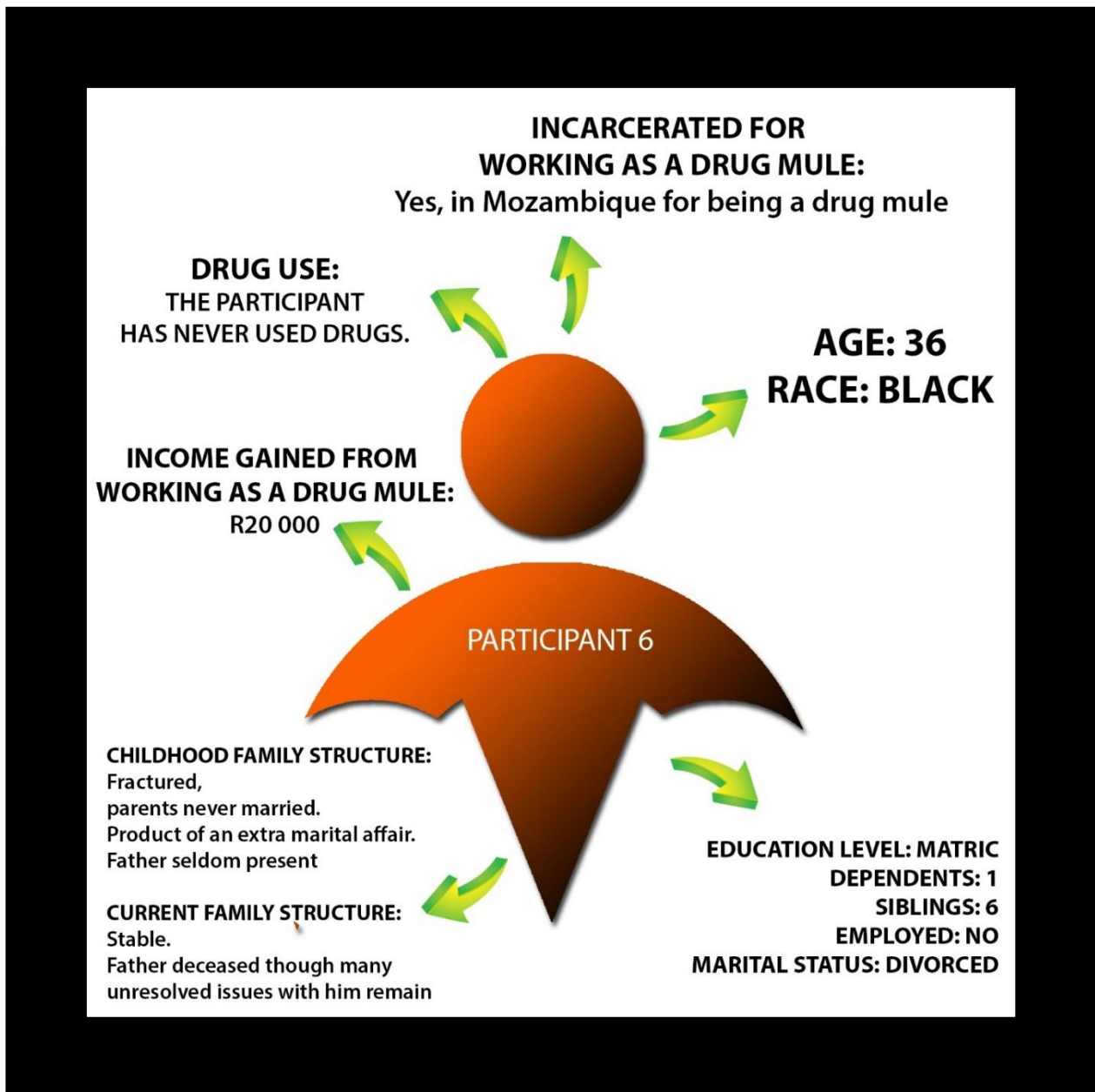
consciously. Despite the complex dynamics with her father, when telling her life story, the Participant came across as smart, informed, and realistic. What started off as uninformed insouciance could easily have resulted in a career path, which indicates that motivations are seldom static but are fluid and may change depending on a person's needs and predisposition to deal with life challenges.

## **5.7 CASE STUDY 6**

### **5.7.1 Biographical details**

Participant 6 is a thirty-six-year-old black woman. She was born and grew up in the Eastern Cape with her six siblings. Participant 6 states that her parents were never married, and she had a fractured relationship with her father. The Participant claims that her mother was her father's mistress when she was conceived as her father was already married with a family of his own. Participant 6 left school during her matric year after falling pregnant at nineteen years of age to take care of her child. Participant 6 returned to school when she was twenty to complete her matric after giving birth. Participant 6 has never married despite living with the father of her child, and she currently lives with her daughter.

FIGURE 7: DEMOGRAPHICS PARTICIPANT 6



### 5.7.2 Family background and childhood

The Participant admitted to having had a relatively good childhood:

*"It was a happy childhood, although we didn't have much, it was a happy childhood. My mother she never did buy anything for herself as she always wanted to take care of us, take us to the very best schools, she tried although I was a little bit rebellious I*

*would say I was always looking for something, I'm not sure what it is, but there was just something, something missing I didn't know what it is."*

The Participant claims that her mother never married her father as she was his mistress, and as such, their father could never be with them fulltime, she states:

*"U be yi side ka babam', so we would see him only briefly when we needed some stuff, he wasn't present, and that hurt a bit, ngaba rebellious. We grew up between her and my father when we were in the Eastern Cape, so imagine just seeing your father a little bit with another family." (She was my father's side chick, so we would see him briefly when we needed some stuff, he wasn't present, and that hurt a bit, I became a bit rebellious... We grew up between her and my father when we were in the Eastern Cape, so imagine just seeing your father a little bit with his wife and other kids.)*

The fact that her father was living with his wife and kids full time was an upsetting issue for Participant 6. So much so that it strained the relationship with her father, mainly due to the fact that the Participant felt unwanted. The Participant stressed that her reason for feeling unwanted was mainly due to the fact that, as a child, she could not understand why her father could be present for his other family but not for them. It exacerbated the situation that her mother worked in correctional services which meant she would be away at odd hours, so she and her siblings were forced to 'take care of each other', while her father was supposedly taking care of his other children with his wife.

When the Participant was nineteen years old, her mother moved to Cape Town to further her studies whilst also working at the same time. The Participant claims that her mother often struggled with six kids while "...my father was back at home with his family near us, and we didn't chat much." The Participant claims that she and her siblings were a bit rebellious and sometimes gave their mother a hard time. The rebellion included things such as truancy, talking back, not doing chores, fighting amongst each other and generally being uncooperative. With the mother often away at work due to working shifts, there was limited supervision on her part.

Participant 6 went to school but had to drop out in grade 12 as she fell pregnant by a Nigerian man and she states;

*"I got pregnant in 2004 with my daughter by a Nigerian man at that time he was dealing with drugs; he was a drug dealer. At first, I didn't know; he told me he loved me and showed me some part of life that I never knew."*

Participant 6 says that her mother was disappointed with a pregnancy whilst she was still at school. Not only did this mean that the Participant would have to leave school to take care of her child but also that the family would have to feed an extra mouth. Participant 6 states that it was during the same year (2004) that her father died. The Participant highlights that she had never been able to reconcile the fact that her father was raising another family nearby, a family which he was very present for yet he was unable to establish that level of closeness with her and her siblings. Participant 6 claims that it was because of that perceived abandonment and alienation from her father that she felt they still had unresolved issues when he passed.

### **5.7.3 Adulthood**

The Participant states that after giving birth to her daughter, she stayed with the father of her child. She acknowledges that life with him was nice at first:

*"At first, he was good, and he would buy me stuffs, food, and everything, supporting my family. We stayed in a flat he was giving me nice life, he'd buy new cars, buy me clothes, he even wanted me to be married to him because he wanted papers and stuff like that, and uh... oh gosh, of course, my mother wasn't happy with it."*

She says as time went by her relationship with her partner changed:

*"..he was first emotionally abusive, and then it changed, it got physically, and stuff, beatings and my mum has noticed that something strange is happening and she lies like I bumped myself in the door, and that is why I am having a blue eye and my mum was like no ways."*

She says that in 2007 the relationship deteriorated to a point where he suddenly left, stopped supporting the baby, and basically disappeared. At that time, she admits that she was struggling to make ends meet, and she then moved to Johannesburg with her daughter to stay with a friend.

The Participant found work as a receptionist, and although according to her, the pay was not good, she managed to save a little bit of money. She was able to contribute

some money to her friend for a while. She says that the company she worked for closed down which meant that she no longer had an income and said her life was hard. She made the decision to send her child to her mother in Cape Town as she could not support her. She remained with her friend and said that her life was uneventful with the exception of her father's death.

#### **5.7.4 Introduction to drug muling**

Before moving to Johannesburg, whilst the Participant was still involved with the father of her child, she was introduced to his Nigerian friend. It was that friend who would ultimately recruit her into being a drug mule. The Participant claims that because the father of the child was no longer around, she ended up becoming friends with the Nigerian man and his wife as they often helped her with money and supplies when she ran short. This was during the time that the father of her child was not a part of their lives at all. She claims:

*"...as for me I knew, the first person who approached me it was actually my child's daddy's friend back then when I was together with him, so he approached me to go to India and which I agreed. At the time, my child was with my mum, and I spoke to them every day. Because I was going and couldn't phone them, I lied to my mother and told her I was going on holiday with a boyfriend."*

The Participant admits that in hindsight, she did not put too much thought into what exactly she agreed to or what would happen if she were caught or if she was set up. The money that she stood to make was at the forefront of her decision making including the burden it would ease in her life.

#### **5.7.5 Mule work**

For her maiden-trip as a drug mule, Participant 6 was offered R 20 000 for the trip to India. She happily agreed, explaining:

*"It was successful, very easy, came back and I thought oh gosh you just get paid for carrying a bag and yah I went back home, took my daughter out and bought my mother stuff, she asked me where did I get the money from because I wasn't working I was still staying with a friend, remember that my daughter was still staying with my mother at the present time before I took her. I was like aah, this boyfriend of mine just gave it*

*to me when we came back from holiday, and she was like there's no way. So, I lied about it and I got away with it."*

The Participant went home to Cape Town to spend time with her mother and daughter. After the Participant had spent most of the money she had made, she went back to live in Johannesburg so she could look for a job. Participant 6 found another job as an administrative clerk and soon she was doing fine and making ends meet. In December 2013, her mother told her that she seemed to be stable with a job and income, ergo she could take her daughter and live with her full time. She agreed but claims:

*"Oh, it's still tough when I think of the rent, for her schooling, for my schooling and for the travelling and everything. In July 2014 I resigned from my job where I was earning like R5500 a month. In August I was like ... uhm... living from charity case kind of thing uhm friends helping out with groceries and stuff like that."*

Participant 6 claims that the man approached her again in September to complete another trip and because the first trip was a success and her circumstances were dire, she happily agreed to do so again.

Participant 6 proceeded to plan for her trip and organised with a friend in the complex she was living in to look after her daughter during the week she would be away. She offered to pay the friend upon her return for taking care of her daughter. Participant 6 confesses that when it was time to travel, she did not feel comfortable for some inexplicable reason, yet she proceeded with the trip considering the money she stood to make. The Participant claims that she decided to travel the second time because of the hard times she was going through:

*"I did it because I was struggling financially; I really had to pay for my child's school fees I had to pay for my own school fees. I actually left her to travel for that week, and I said to her you know what mummy will come and make things better, to pay rent, to pay school fees, to pay for things that you really need. I just thought I'll be gone for a week and then everything would be back to normal."*

On her way back she had to transit in Mozambique, and it was there she was met with trouble, she recalls it this way:

*"...somewhere on the 16<sup>th</sup>...no the 15<sup>th</sup> I was travelling and supposed to come back on the 28<sup>th</sup>, but that's when I got arrested, so yah. So ya, the only one successful trip*

*it was once.” \*The Participant feels like she was set up and says that in retrospect she should have seen something was not right\* “I feel like I was set up, there’s everything that went wrong from the beginning to the end. My gut feeling was telling me something is wrong, just nothing seemed right okay, but I just clouded it with the problems that were in front of me.”*

In hindsight, Participant 6 regrets going on the trip and concludes that she should have listened to her gut feeling. Surprisingly enough though, the Participant insists that it was financial struggles that led her to go back the second time for the prospect of easy money she had made from ‘carrying a bag’ as she previously alluded to.

### **5.7.6 Motivation for becoming a drug mule**

When asked what motivated her to be a drug mule, the Participant insists that it was the hard-financial times she was going through that motivated her to become a drug mule. When further probed about why she did not plan for the future and make better choices after the first trip, the Participant claims that she was too excited about the lump sum she had received and had previously struggled, so she spent the money without much thought. She elaborates as follows:

*“I was stranded, I was having hard times. I didn’t want to take my child back to my mother again to look after. I had to make a plan. The money was nice, and it was easy, so yeah, it was just something that I did to make extra money until I was sharp.”*

Further, the fact that her mother had returned her daughter back into her care increased the pressure of providing for both of them again instead of just for herself as she had done previously. Ultimately this led to the Participant accepting another drug trip.

### **5.7.7 Current life and lifestyle**

Participant 6 lives in the Eastern Cape with her brother and daughter. She is doing a project management course. She does a few piece jobs to make ends meet but says her brother provides and is very protective of her. She says that her daughter has a good relationship with her father now as he had to step in when she was arrested. They remain civil to each other but have no relationship outside their daughter. She



served 3 years of a twelve-year sentence. She was one of the lucky ones that were pardoned. She praises God for her release and also her family for their support and says that she was sadder for her family than she was for herself:

*“...the sad part for me was seeing my mother’s face after I was arrested, it’s like yesterday, I promise myself to do the right thing about my life one day, but I’m not blaming anyone for it but uhm what can I do hey.”*

She aims to make her mother proud and says she’d like to study further as her mother completed her second degree in correctional management while she was away. Reflecting on her life at the moment she says that being a drug mule is not something she would ever consider doing again as she claims:

*“The time in jail was very hard. It’s was dirty, the language was a problem. I wouldn’t wish this on my worst enemy, never, never.”*

#### **5.7.8 An analysis of motivating and causal risk factors**

An analysis of the case study above identified the Participant’s family background and upbringing as well as empowerment, excitement and lifestyle as the causal risk factors and motives which played a part in Participant 6 becoming a drug mule. The instability the Participant experienced growing up played an important role in creating an environment which left the Participant feeling somehow dispossessed and disenfranchised. Despite her tough upbringing, the freedom the Participant claimed accompanied making ‘easy money’ led to her being seduced by the perceived effortlessness of working as a drug mule.

#### **5.7.9 Motives and causal risk factors**

The following were the causal risk factors and motives identified:

- **Family background and upbringing**

- Fractured family structure, strained relationship with father, limited supervision

Sumter et al. (2017:12) outline results from previous studies that show that people from large families, whose parents did not express love towards them, often feel alienated and lack self-worth which may lead to them engaging in crime. The Participant stated that her father’s disinterest in their lives was hard to contend with,

mainly because he was a fully involved parent in his other children's lives. Consequently, Bailey (2013:121) also highlights the existing link between female criminality and difficult life circumstances such as poverty, childhood and adult abuse, neglect, and drug dependency. Participant 6 admits to feeling neglected by her father because of their strained relationship, particularly because he was active and involved in the lives of his other children.

- **Empowerment, excitement, and lifestyle**

- *The lure of easy money*

Despite some justification Participant 6 concedes that the lure of making “...so much money for carrying a bag...” was a massive drawcard in making her decision. Singer et al. (2013:127) found the primary motivating factor cited by drug mules was the high lump sum payment they were to receive as compensation, which was always higher than if a person had worked for more extended periods in a legitimate job. This was also the case with Participant 6, and added to that, the success of the first trip served as reassurance that there was plenty to gain from being a drug mule rather than working her clerical job and still being unable to make ends meet. Despite this, the Participant's reasons were still underpinned by more profound circumstances relating to her immediate family and intimate partner relationships, in that, the inability to take care of her daughter financially and her ex-partners lack of financial support had an influence on her decision.

#### **5.7.10 Criminological explanation for Participant 6's behaviour**

From the above case study, a criminological explanation for Participant 6's behaviour can be linked to the following theory:

- *Walter Reckless' Theory of Containment*

The Walter Reckless Containment Theory could be used to explain the Participant's criminal behaviour. On the surface, the Participant's low paying job and lack of opportunities seemed like the reason she became a drug mule. However, a more in-depth analysis of her story shows that she was more concerned with providing for herself and her daughter than the need to 'get rich quick' and live a flashy lifestyle. Tibbetts and Hemmens (2010:457) state that containment is another form of a control

theory expanded on by Walter Reckless which argues that people can be pushed towards deviancy due to the social environments such as unemployment or lack of education; and can be pulled into deviance by other influences, for example, deviant associates. This is evidenced in the life of Participant 6, according to her narrative.

Participant 6 was recruited by friends of her ex-partner. She was familiar with them, and due to her financial struggles, she was easy to recruit. This was an encounter formed from the Participant's patterns of everyday life. This was due to the fact that the Nigerian couple had been helping support her and her child whilst the father was not involved, which was reassuring to her so at no point did she foresee herself being arrested. The Containment Theory is a control theory which postulates that people operate on two opposite forces in their lives namely internal and external containments or 'push or pull' forces (Lanier et al., 2014:156).

Flexon (2010:5) indicates that the Containment Theory is one version of the control theories, which are theories that rationalise that in the absence of strong social systems, deviancy will flourish. Walter Reckless' Containment Theory was an addition to the works of Albert J. Reiss. The psychological forces - or what is referred to as 'pushes' - can be the elements that drive an individual towards crime and deviance. The pull factors - which are the external pressures as mentioned above - form part of the main influences that can remove an individual from acceptable social norms. The Containment Theory maintains that individuals are all put through "*push and pulls*" in life; factors that either push or pull an individual towards offending. The Theory argues that both the internal and external containment help prevent deviancy in society. Internal containment denotes an individual's propensity to self-regulate and steer themselves towards socially acceptable goals. External containment refers to the collective ability of the state, community, family, church, and other influential groups to maintain order and keep an individual's behaviour within the standard rules, values and norms – essentially, it's the second line of defence. Consequently, people who are repeatedly exposed to crime and deviancy end up learning that deviant behaviour is acceptable and will likely be pulled into a life of crime.

Unlu and Ekici (2012:299) note that drug mules take a high risk for a small return as they see being a drug mule as an easy way to make money. Therefore, an individual

can be pulled into being a drug mule by the attraction of a 'good life' and outwardly making what seems like fast, easy money. In the case of Participant 6, the push factor for her involvement in the crime was mainly the inability to support her child with the money she was making. Also, the Participant was not highly educated, so the jobs that she could do were limited. Admittedly, the Participant also lost her job due to her contract ending meaning that she was unemployed with a daughter to support. The Participant had no genuine sense of belonging as her family structure was fractured.

Pull factors are elements that draw people towards deviancy, meaning they draw a person away from their original way of life towards law-breaking. For the Participant, the pull factor was her friendship with the Nigerian couple who were involved in drugs, which can be referred to as the pull of companionship. The Participant already came from a fractured background with limited familial support structures (with the exception of her mother, who helped take care of her daughter). Despite her mother's support, the Participant was independent from a young age and used to taking care of herself or being taken care of by her siblings; resulting in limited guardianship. This allowed the Participant to make decisions without consultation or advice, as she was not sufficiently contained. There was limited inner containment in terms of the Participant's life as the father of her child had left her and virtually abandoned the child which left her somewhat depressed; she was demoralised at work, working a job that she didn't enjoy and didn't pay enough money, her mother was in Cape Town, her siblings in the Eastern Cape, her father was involved with his other family and thus didn't have time for her family, and she was living with her friend, so she did not have a solid support structure around her.

In summary, the pulls that the Participant experienced were economic insecurity, lack of viable opportunities and unemployment. Her external containment avenues such as school, family and meaningful relationships were very limited. Her internal containment was also lacking as she was frustrated with the situation with the father of her child, and she had not reached any of her set goals in terms of school and career advancement. This, in turn, led to push factors which included discontentment and inadequacy to a point where she had to take her child to be looked after by her mother briefly. The Participant's internal and external structures were not aligned. In turn, this made the Participant more susceptible to being involved in crime as a drug mule

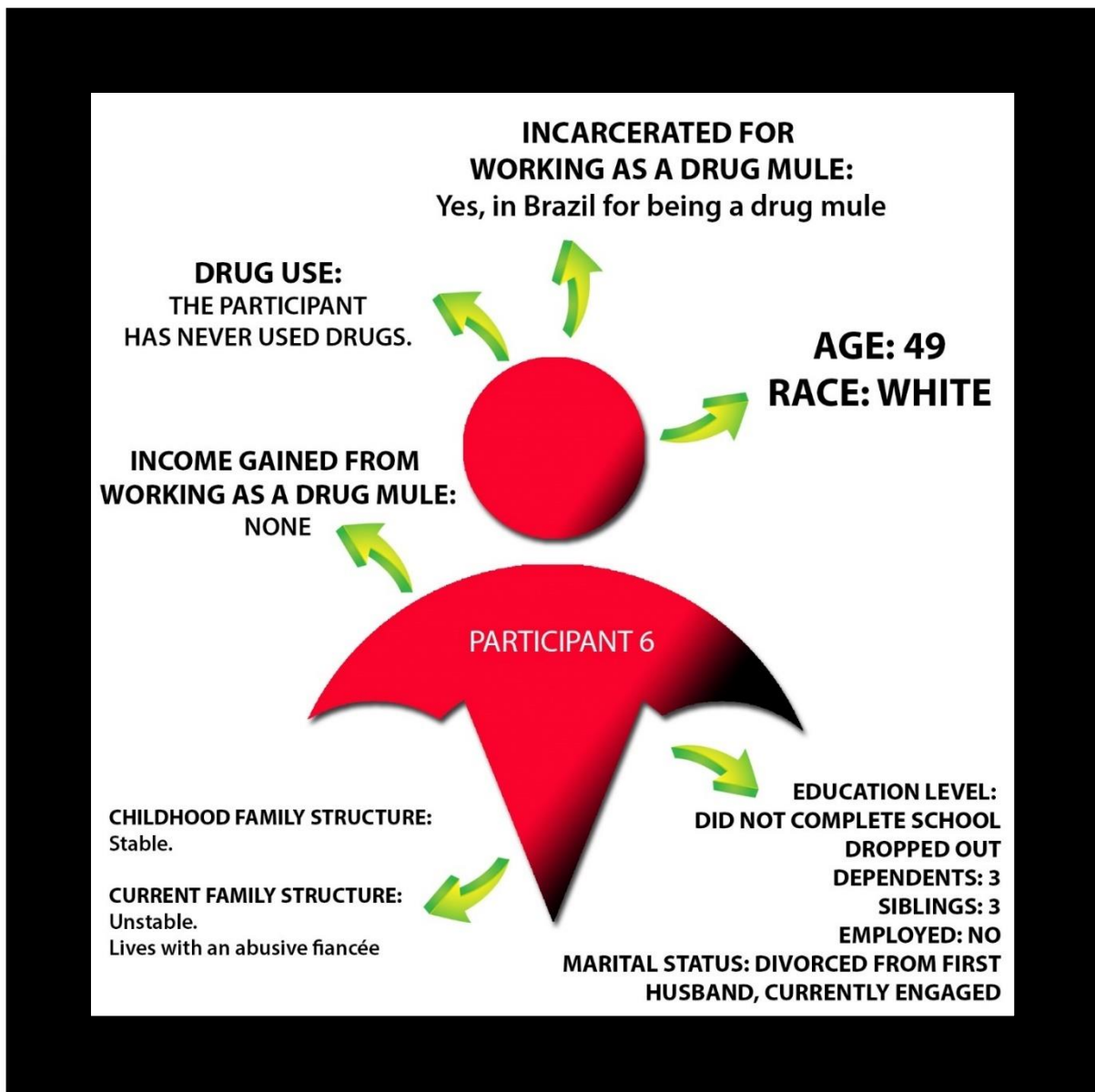
because she was primed to be a mule by the only people showing her some compassion at that time. There was no one to protect her or someone she could turn to who would have perhaps provided her necessary counsel that being a mule was not the best choice.

## **5.8 CASE STUDY 7**

### **5.8.1 Biographical details**

Participant 7 is a forty-nine-year-old, Caucasian woman. She was born and bred in Pretoria West and is one of four siblings comprising of two sisters and a brother. Her parents are both deceased and had remained married to each other throughout until they died. The Participant attended school but chose to drop out of high school. The Participant is divorced, and from her that marriage, she has 3 adult children with 4 grandchildren. She currently lives in a garden cottage of a rented house in Pretoria West with her fiancé and her grandson.

**FIGURE 8: DEMOGRAPHICS: PARTICIPANT 7**



### **5.8.2 Family background and childhood**

The Participant maintains that she had a good childhood and stable upbringing. She did not complete high school because she claims:

*"I didn't' complete school ...I was till standard 7, and I was a rebel neh, opstandigee, I hated school. I hate school."* (I didn't complete school, I was till standard 7, I was a rebel neh, rebellious, oh I hated school, I hate school).

Participant 7 describes that she grew up in a loving home with both her parents and siblings and both of her parents are now deceased. She describes her childhood as nice and happy, stating that her parents did not drink, smoke, or take drugs. Participant 7 could not recall any significant incidents or notable occurrences in her childhood and upbringing, just that she grew up in a stable home. Even though her parents were not wealthy, the Participant states that they never lacked.

### 5.8.3 Adulthood

After dropping out of school, the Participant stayed at home and helped her father with his car mechanic business. Participant 7 fell pregnant in 1986, at seventeen years old, and she subsequently decided to get married to the father of her children and moved out of her family home. The Participant was married for more than twenty years to a man she met whilst at school. She never worked while she was married to him because he did not want her to work. She cannot remember just how long they have been divorced as they had been separated for a long time before divorcing.

The Participant states that although her ex-husband was not abusive, he was very jealous to a point where he was jealous of their son and her affection towards him. This, in turn, led him to be very controlling which was the cause of their divorce as well as the fact that she no longer loved him; she explains:

*"I was staying with him the whole time for the children." \*After her divorce, the Participant went back to live with her parents and got a job as a bar lady in Pretoria West. She met a younger man that she became involved with romantically whilst working at the bar, exclaiming: \* "...Argh, that was a disaster! He was abusing me, beating me up and treating me bad."*

She ended the relationship, went back home, stopped working as a bar lady but later took up the job again, which is how she met her next fiancé who died in 2008.

Participant 7 professes that she and her fiancé were together for six years, contending that he too became abusive after a while and beat her regularly. She states that things became so bad between them that even his mother became abusive towards her, often slapping her and throwing objects at her leading her to take out a protection

order against her. That made the relationship between her and her fiancé even more contentious as she could never be with him when his mother was around. Their relationship deteriorated, but she never left the relationship. Participant 7 claims that her fiancé went on a fishing trip with his mother and kids from his previous marriage, and shortly after the trip he was admitted to Steve Biko Hospital with septicemia after an infection from a broken tooth. Whilst in hospital, he had some complications following surgery, and he died. This was a significant shock to the Participant as the last time they interacted the fiancé had gone fishing and then the next thing he died. She states:

*“...for me was maar a big shock, because when he died I wasn’t there and dit het my baaie hard gevat want ek was nie daar nie en die ma het my afgekraak van die hospital.”* (For me it was a big shock because when he died I wasn’t there and that was hard for me to take because I wasn’t there and his mum cussed me away from the hospital).

The Participant confesses that her fiancé's death is still a sore point for her as she claims that his family did not allow her to attend his funeral unless she cancelled the protection order against his mother. Participant 7 refused and was subsequently not given any funeral details nor was she allowed to attend the funeral, and to this day she does not know where her fiancé is buried and has never been able to visit his place of rest. The late fiancé's mother sold his house after his death so she could not even try and get information from the new occupants and neighbours.

#### **5.8.4 Introduction to mule work**

After her fiancé's death the Participant got another job again as a bar lady in Danville, a place she had worked at three times before. She met a young lady at work who was employed to clean, and they became friends. She describes how she would often attend parties with the lady sometimes sleeping over at her flat. One day after work, the lady asked her to accompany her to a friend's house:

*“...now this is the guy that I met that led me into this shit.”*

She claims when she first met him with her work friend, they didn't talk very much, but soon after that, he came to the bar as she was completing her shift. He then told her that he had come to see her because he had liked her from the first time, he saw her.



He further asked whether she wanted to be his girlfriend and accompany him to Brazil, where he worked as a mining engineer.

She admits that she was taken aback by the person but adds that there was a bit of a connection between them, so she did not entirely dismiss him. He courted her for a few weeks and then brought up the matter of travelling with him again. She agreed to quit her job and travel with him, stating that:

*“...eers was ek ‘n bietjie skepties want ek het van my job gehou.”* (I was a little sceptical as I liked my job)

She says that the fact that her family had warmed up to him as she had to his family made her more comfortable with making that decision. In hindsight she says she should have listened to her boss because when she left the job at her bar, he said:

*“...jong! Weet jy nie of hy’s ‘n drug mule of iets, ek glo nie”* (Hey! Do you not know if he is a drug mule or something, I do not believe)

Notwithstanding this, she took it as a joke and dismissed it. She says that her father too, when dropping them off at the airport, shared the same sentiments asking her to please reconsider going as he felt uncomfortable with this trip and suspected her partner of being a drug mule. She sighs, reflecting quietly:

*“.. you know hy’t nie vir my so gelyk nie, hy was reeds al reg, so ek het nie daar gedink nie. Ek trust iemand so gou.”* (You know he didn’t look like that to me, he was already all right, so I didn’t think there. I trust a person so quick quick)

### **5.8.5 Mule work**

The Participant and the man travelled to Brazil in 2008 for a week, and according to her, they had a wonderful time; it was like a holiday. They came back after a week having also visited other South American countries. As it was her first time having travelled abroad, she was elated about the trip and even more infatuated with her partner. She says that he was such a gentleman and so different from her ex-fiancé because there was no drama with him, no fighting, and no abuse. When he asked her to go with him again, she did not hesitate to go and see the world as at that time her mother had recently died, and she needed to be cheered up. They left again, but she says this time their time together was a bit different in that he was more secretive, and he would send her to the shops or go outside when he was on the phone. Still, she didn’t make much of it. During that time, that Participant and her boyfriend saw a

Nigerian couple a few times and she thought nothing of it. She remembers an incident during this stay where two policemen came to their room and asked them if they knew anything about drugs or if they had any drugs on them. Their room was searched, and no drugs were found, a fact which she said made her feel uncomfortable, but when she asked him what was going on, he claimed he also didn't know.

The Participant states that it was during the second trip, where she also met his Nigerian friend and his wife after the police incident. The Nigerian and his wife lived in Brazil and came to the hotel to come and see her boyfriend. She says he would never talk to this man in front of her and again the secrecy of his behaviour made her feel uncomfortable, but still, she didn't over analyse the situation. The day they were supposed to leave to come back to South Africa, she says her boyfriend asked if they could go and pick up some gifts and new luggage from his Nigerian friend. She didn't think much of it because they were on the way home, so she agreed. She quickly states that until then, she knew nothing about drugs. Her only exposure to drugs was dagga that people used recreationally. She claims zero exposure to hard drugs until her incarceration.

She further explains what happened when they went to the Nigerians house:

*"...ek rook, en **\*name withheld\*** rook ook, maar die man van die huis rook nie, so altyd was ek buite kant met my bier, hulle was in die huis besig. I wasn't in the house to see what they were doing. I just heard can this one go. Can that one go? And when I looked, it was clothes."* (I don't smoke and **\*name withheld\*** smokes too, but the man of the house doesn't smoke, so all the time I was outside with my beer, they were busy in the house. I wasn't in the house to see what they were doing. I just heard can this one go? Can that one go? And when I looked it was clothes)

After some time, they finally left for the airport with their new luggage sets, and she remembers commenting on why their bags were so heavy stating:

*"My tas is swaar, hy se ja don't worry mine is also heavy."* (My bag is heavy, he said ja don't worry mine is also heavy).

They arrived at the airport, and because they still had some time, they went to a restaurant and had some food, and everything was fine until they were asked by airport

staff to go to the interrogation room. Whilst there, they were interrogated, and their luggage searched. The Participant claimed she maintained her innocence the whole-time during questioning and kept on asking her boyfriend repeatedly:

*“... Wat gaan aan? Wat gaan aan.”* (What’s going on? what’s going on?).

Airport security searched their bags and discovered concealed false compartments filled with drugs. She vehemently maintains that she knew nothing and that during that whole ordeal her boyfriend kept on saying was sorry and that he would ‘fix it.’

They were kept at the airport cells for the weekend. After the weekend, they were transferred to prison while awaiting their trials. During her time awaiting a court appearance, she and the boyfriend kept in touch by mail. She says it was in those letters she decided to entrap him at the suggestion of her state-appointed lawyer. She’d write letters to him in Afrikaans, pleading for him to do something, and he would reply apologising for getting her into trouble. She showed those letters to her state-appointed lawyer and after being translated the letters proved that she was set up. The Participant spent seven months awaiting the first court appearance and was released nine months after her case was dismissed. In total, she spent one year and four months in prison. She says her family stood by her throughout her time in prison, and she makes a special mention about how her older sister was the one that stood by her the most, stating that she sent her money, stationery, paper, cards, toiletries and all sorts of things in order to make her time more bearable. The Participant states that she made money inside the prison, describing the following:

*“I made all types of cards, birthday cards, valentine’s day cards and sorte tipiese dinge because that is how we made money inside, I would charge with cigarettes, charge you two packets cigarettes then I make nice card.”*

After her release, the Participant was able to return to South Africa after one week as her children had first to raise funds for her return aeroplane ticket in 2010. She stayed in a homeless shelter while her family raised funds. Upon returning home, she says it was a relief to find her father still alive, but he died not long after her return.

She says that her boyfriend spent almost four years in prison, but she had already cut off all contact with him after her court appearance. A while after she returned, his son sought her out, and she had this to say:

*“...But you know his son knew about it. But I just found out later about it when I got back. He came to me and said to me; I’m so sorry I didn’t tell you. The other son had gone twice with him and I found out later that he was gonna take his younger one with when he was just sixteen years old, luckily he didn’t do it, I went otherwise he would also be in prison with him... innocently in prison.”*

Her boyfriend died a year after being released, which she heard through her old boss at the bar she worked at.

### **5.8.6 Motivation for becoming a drug mule**

Out of all the participants who took part in the research, Participant 7 was the only Participant who had absolutely no idea she was a drug mule until she was apprehended and subsequently arrested at the airport. It is on that premise that this research cannot categorically state what motivated the Participant to be a drug mule. However, Bailey (2013:136) found that some female drug mules experience victimisation through their emotional dependence on their male partners which in turn results in them breaking the law. This was the case with Participant 7 - her dependence on men for emotional happiness led to her being victimised physically by her ex-husband and fiancé, and by her next partner who tricked her into carrying drugs. This is what the Participant had to say regarding her motivation:

*“Nothing motivated me; I was set up. I didn’t do anything; I didn’t know nothing! I don’t know about drugs. I was tricked because of my good heart. I was tricked because I think I was in love with nice man. You know it was so nice finally having a person who give me attention who don’t beat me up or things like that, it was nice to know that at least someone want a future me. Jy weet neh, ek was stupid, vreeslik stupid.”*

When the Participant was probed about whether she would have carried the drugs had she been made aware by her partner, she responded that she probably would have. She reasoned that she would have had to carry the drugs as she would have had no other means to return to South Africa had she refused. She had no money, she didn’t know anyone in Brazil, and furthermore, she was an inexperienced traveller, so in retrospect, she probably would have carried the drugs back had she been made aware that she was carrying drugs. This, in essence, would mean that she would have been motivated by her need to return to South Africa. This, however, is conjecture on

her part as she emphatically states that she was in that situation because she wasn't aware that she was being set up to be a drug mule.

#### **5.8.7 Current life and lifestyle**

Participant 7 is unemployed and makes extra money from her daughter by looking after her grandson and doing her washing once a week. She also sells homemade beetroot and pickled, bottled vegetables which she makes herself. Participant 7 says her greatest wish is to own and operate a food truck as she loves to cook. At the moment, the Participant is engaged and living with her fiancé, who is a chronic alcoholic, and abusive both physically and emotionally. When questioned on why she does not leave the relationship, Participant 7 says she has put her children through a lot, so she stays with him as she does not want to burden them again. At the conclusion of our interview, Participant 7 was a bit maudlin and said the following:

*"I don't know why I am attracted to men who likes to hit me and treat me like this, but what can I do now? My children has got their own problems, and I can't make it hard for them. He has a job, pays the rent, buys food and does everything so I'll just stay with him. I have bothered my family a lot."*

#### **5.8.8 An analysis of causal risk and motivating factors**

An analysis of the case study highlighted the involvement of a romantic partner and being a victim of duplicity by the said partner as the risk factors which contributed to Participant 7 becoming a drug mule. The Participant admitted to being gullible and often losing herself in relationships with men. This made it easier for the Participant to be preyed upon by her partner. Participant 7 seemed to lack emotional intelligence, especially in her romantic relationships which culminated in her being victimised in one form or the other.

#### **5.8.9 Motives and causal risk factors**

The following were the causal risk factors and motives identified:

- **Romantic partners, family, and friends**

- Emotional dependence

Urquiza-Haas (2017:318) explains that even though some mules fit the characteristics attributed to vulnerable women, they may still be judged as couriers because they are ultimately responsible for their own lack of 'management skills.' This is the case with Participant 7 - she lived a rudimentary life, unexposed at best, so she was easy to manipulate and deceive. For example, the fact that her colleague and her father alluded to the fact that her boyfriend may be a mule was not enough to raise concern from the Participant as she was blinded by the fact he was 'kind' to her, especially given her past relationships. Furthermore, the Participant neither expected compensation, nor did she receive any.

The Participant explained:

*"I was just happy with going on holiday with him. He didn't treat me bad or hit me or nothing. I didn't think anything about drugs. Even when he was with the Nigerian man inside, I was busy smoking outside; I didn't think nothing. If I didn't meet **\*name withheld\*** I wouldn't be in jail."*

Although the Participant's parents were low-income earners, they were not destitute, and the Participant admitted that they never lacked in terms of basics, and instead the Participant was raised in a law-abiding, stable household by both parents, where they were fed and looked after. The Participant emphatically states that she was not inclined to be a drug mule or commit any crime. Her involvement was solely attributable to her boyfriend, who took advantage of her naïve nature and deceived her into breaking the law.

- **Victimisation**

- Tricked and hoodwinked

It is clear from the Participant's narrative that she was bamboozled into becoming a drug mule. The Participant's self-confessed naiveté and her emotional neediness in romantic relationships made her a prime target for men to take advantage of her. Participant 7 described that she was excited to have a lover who wanted to take her overseas as her previous partners had been abusive, and so a kind and generous partner was a welcome surprise in her unexciting life. Urquiza-Haas (2017:309) aver that drug mules are often considered vulnerable offenders by legal, policy, and

academic discourses. From her narrative, Participant 7 was a victim of her boyfriend's deceit which includes characteristics attributed to 'involvement through naïveté and exploitation' and 'exploitation' of the offender's 'vulnerability' which indicates her lesser role in being a drug mule. This was further underscored by Bailey (213:122) who made a note of the fact that coercion at the hands of spouses or lovers is a form of victimisation.

Although the Participant was not necessarily coerced, it is clear from her case study that she was tricked into breaking the law. This may be viewed as victimisation, given that she was an unknowing Participant in crime, and as such, she did not make an informed decision to be a drug mule.

#### **5.8.10 Criminological explanation for Participant 7's behaviour**

From the above case study, a criminological explanation for Participant 7's behaviour can be linked to the following theory:

- *Lifestyle Theory and Routine Activities Theory*

It is difficult to explain the Participant's behaviour in terms of criminological theory as she was not aware that she was being used to commit a crime, which like Participant 1, classifies her as a victim. There are two prevalent victimisation theories that can help to explain why some people become targets for criminals, namely the Lifestyle Theory and the Routine Activity Theory. Pratt and Turanovic (2016:335) posit that these two theories are regularly found in victimisation literature so much so that they are usually used interchangeably. The only difference between the theories is how risk is conceived when it comes to victimisation (Pratt & Turanovic, 2016:335).

The Lifestyle Theory and the Routine Activity Theory view victimisation as the merging of a motivated offender, attractive victim, and lack of capable guardians (Pratt & Turanovic, 2016:335; Brown et al., 2010:182). This theory suggests that people are usually targeted based on their lifestyle choices which in turn exposes them to criminals, or places them in situations where crimes can be committed. In this case, the Participant was hoodwinked into carrying drugs without her knowledge, and as such, the Participant can be classified as an attractive victim because of her gullibility.

Moreover, Lifestyle Theory focuses on the fact that people become victims of crime mainly because they put themselves in social situations without necessarily applying their rationale and intelligence for work and leisure activities. The Lifestyle Theory is more focused on personal or social environments while the Routine Activities is based on habitat (Choi, Earl, Lee & Cho, 2019:13).

The Routine Activities Theory is based on three presuppositions known as the crime triangle, which maintain that when three elements are present at a specific space and time, a crime will occur. These elements include the presence of motivated offenders, suitable targets and lastly the absence of capable guardians (Brown et al., 2013:196-197). In the case of Participant 7, all the above elements were present. The Participant admitted that she is a very naïve person and that she is prone to getting into relationships fast; usually ending up being abused. In this case, the motivated offender was the Participant's boyfriend. He was able to recognise the Participant's delicate and somehow needy character quickly, and thus he was able to deceive her in the short space of time they were together. Participant 2 was also a suitable target in many ways. The Participant was neither worldly nor street smart, which means that she was unable to be discerning about the choices that she made, and like Participant 1, she also lacked emotional intelligence. Lastly, the Participant was living away from her family by herself. She did not mention having any solid friendships as she came from an abusive relationship; thus, she did not have any capable guardians or people around her that protected her vulnerability. Moreover, she worked at night in an environment that is likely to be home to unsavoury characters. All those factors facilitated her victimisation. Likewise, the Participant stated that her yearning for stability and companionship affected her choices. The Participant's naïveté is astonishing, especially when one considers that she was groomed and duped by a man much younger than herself.

Although the Participant was not living a risky lifestyle in terms of risqué behaviour, she admitted that she was not naturally intelligent and that she takes things at face value. She was not aware of the dangerous situation she was putting herself in by agreeing to go overseas with a practical stranger whom she had known for two weeks, added to the fact that she had never travelled out of the country before this point. The Participant admits feeling vulnerable and lonely after the death of her fiancé, and this



made her a perfectly suitable target as she was easy to manipulate emotionally. The Participant came from a low-income area, which means she was not very exposed or worldly, and she had never been on an aeroplane and had never travelled much outside Gauteng.

The biggest critique of the Lifestyle Theory and Routine Activities is that it may seem like victim-blaming (Brown et al., 2013:199). However, out of all criminological theories, they are most apt in explaining the link between the Participant and being duped into being a drug mule.

## **5.9 CHAPTER CONCLUSION**

From the interviews, most of the participants indicated some form of willingness except for Participant 1 and 7. The participants' degree of willingness to be drug mules was motivated by a variety of factors. There was no straightforward singular reason for participation, and in most interviews, there were dual motives present. The motivations identified included financial/economic motives, victimization, romantic partners, criminal inclination, empowerment, and status. Participant 1 was the only outlier in that she was, in fact, a victim of human trafficking. Participant 2 was outwardly motivated by financial gains, empowerment, and status, although admittedly her background and upbringing are factors that played a vital role in her choices. With Participant 3, although greed and financial motivation are there, it was clear that she was trapped in a loveless marriage, and she was persuaded into being a mule by her husband on whom she was emotionally dependent. Participant 4 admitted to initially being motivated by the desire to provide for her kids. However, she admits that after making some money, being a mule was by choice. Participants 5 and 6, like Participant 2 were motivated mainly by financial gains albeit for different reasons.

In summary, socio-economic factors, human trafficking, criminal associations with the involvement of romantic partners, family and friends, financial and economic gain, empowerment, lifestyle and status, and victimisation with specific emphasis on being tricked, were the themes that emerged from this research regarding female motivations for being drug mules. No participant admitted to having actively sought out drug mule work.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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#### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter, conclusions drawn from the case studies discussed in chapter 5 will be presented. These conclusions aim to shed light on the various motives for why women become drug mules. Probing what motivates females to become drug mules is crucial as it could assist law enforcement with the development of informed prevention and management strategies for drug-related crime.

This chapter will commence with a discussion of how the aims and objectives of the study were achieved. A discussion of the conclusions will follow thereon. This chapter will conclude with recommendations.

#### **6.2 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The findings presented in Chapter 5 were interpreted to achieve the aim of the study, namely, to determine what motivates females to become drug mules. Various criminological theories, together with in-depth case studies were used to achieve this aim. The predominant criminological theories used to help explore female motivations for becoming drug mules were Sykes and Matza's 1957 Neutralization Theory, Tajfel and Turner's 1979 Social Identity Theory, the Rational Choice Theory, Walter Reckless' Theory of Containment and lastly, the Lifestyle and Routine Activities Theory. Furthermore, to fully explain female motivations, human trafficking was also discussed as another reason for females becoming drug mules.

In order to meet the aim of the study, the following research questions were identified.

- i. How did the participants view their experience as a drug mule?
- ii. Did socio-economic factors influence participants to become a drug mule?
- iii. What role did romantic partners, family members and/or friends play in the participants becoming drug mules?

- iv. Did participant lifestyles play a role in them becoming drug mules?
- v. What other factors contribute to women becoming drug mules?

The research questions provided guidance for the development of the studies objectives. The aim of this study was achieved through means of the following objectives

**i. Objective 1 - to describe participant experiences and perceptions acting as drug mules**

This aim was achieved during the data collection phase where case study design and an in-depth interview was used to capture the narration of 7 participant life stories about how they became drug mules and what motivated their choices in this regard.

**ii. Objective 2 - to explore what motivated women to become drug mules by focusing on socio-economic factors, relational motivators, and factors in their social functioning**

This objective was achieved through an in-depth-literature review in Chapter 3, including an analysis of criminological theories. The literature reviews aimed to explore existing research concerning the factors that motivated women to become drug mules by focusing on their socio-economic background, economic status, family history and social conditions. Chapter 4 provided a background on the global and local drug trade and drug mules.

The objective was furthermore achieved in the discussion of the findings from the study in chapter 5. The life stories of the participants were presented as a narrative followed by an analysis to identify the factors that were causal motives for them to become drug mules. A criminological analysis making use of criminological theories was discussed in chapter 3.

**iii. Objective 3 - to explore causal risks that indirectly motivate women to act as drug mules.**

Similar to objective 2, this objective was also achieved through the drug trafficking and smuggling overview (chapter 2) and the literature review, including an analysis of criminological theories (chapter 3) and findings of the study (chapter 5). The purpose of this objective was to identify causal risk factor that indirectly motivated women to become drug mules.

Conclusions from the study will henceforth be presented.

## 6.3 KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

### 6.3.1 Demographic characteristics

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven participants. Table 1 below is a tabular summary of the demographic characteristics of those who participated.

**TABLE 1: Summary of participant demographic characteristics**

VARIABLE	P 1	P 2	P 3	P 4	P 5	P 6	P 7
Age	49	24	48	52	40	36	49
Age when participant acted as a drug mule	38	19	N/A	33	21	28	38
Education	Incomplete	Matric	Matric	Incomplete	Degree	Matric	Incomplete
Employed	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Marital Status	Divorced	Engaged	Separated	Divorced	Divorced	Divorced	Divorced
Imprisoned for being a drug mule	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Drug abuse	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No

Income made from being a drug mule	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
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### 6.3.2 Age of the participants

Participants current ages ranged between twenty-four and fifty-two years while the ages when they acted as drug mules were between nineteen and thirty-eight years when they became drug mules. Van Heerden (2014:123) found that the highest group of South African drug mules were between 30 years and 35 years old, with mules between twenty to thirty years and above forty being the second highest group. Findings from this study concur with Van Heerden's as the majority of the participants in this research were between the ages of thirty to thirty-five when they were drug mules or incarcerated for being drug mules. Participant 2, 4 and 5 were in their twenties, which falls into the second-highest category according to Van Heerden (2014:124).

### 6.3.3 Educational background of the participants

All of the participants who participated in the research attended school; however, the levels of completion varied amongst them. Only one of the participants had an undergraduate degree. Three of the other participants did not complete their matric. Of those three, two dropped out of school after discovering they were pregnant, whilst the third admitted to dropping out because of simply not being interested in school. The final three participants completed their matric qualification, although two only did so after first dropping out and suspending their studies where after they returned to complete it.

There is very little research that specifically speaks to the educational level of drug mules. Malinowska-Sempruch and Rychkova (2015:6) aver that research dealing with women in the drug trade tends to assume that drug mules and women involved in drug trafficking generally have a poor educational background, lack economic opportunities and are abuse victims. Overall, a majority of the women in this study had basic education that did not extend to the tertiary level. Due to the small sample size, it

cannot be concluded if drug mules, in general, have a poor educational background. With regards to this study, the majority of the participants had a low level of education. It can, therefore, be concluded that within the context of this study, the participants low educational level may be an indirect motivator for them becoming drug mules because it limited their career and financial/earning opportunities.

#### **6.3.4 Marital status**

Coincidentally, the majority of the participants are divorced except for participant 2 and 3. Participant 2 has never married and is currently engaged. Participant 3 is technically married but has been living apart from her husband for the past 10 years. They are in the process of getting divorced; however, due to the acrimonious nature of the divorce, it has not been finalised. When the participants were asked whether or not their relationship status at the time had any bearing on their decision to become drug mules, all of them gave varying answers. Participant 1 states that her abusive ex-husband did not support her nor their children ergo in a way the lack of support left her destitute and desperate for any kind of work. Participant 2 claims that had she been married at the time there is a high likelihood that she would not have been involved in the drug trade. Participant 3 was the only one who categorically stated that her marriage was the reason she became a drug mule, Participant 4, like participant 1, also hinted at the fact that the hostile nature of her and her ex-husband's relationship put her in a desperate state but nevertheless she takes full responsibility for her ultimate decision to become a drug mule. Participant 5 did not opine on whether or not she would have become a drug mule if she were married at that time. Participant 6, like participant 1 and 4, also mentioned that she would have never turned to her ex-husband's friends had the ex-husband been "*doing what he was supposed to*". She also took partial responsibility for her actions, but throughout the interview, there was an undertone of blame directed towards her ex-husband. Participant 7 states that her ex-fiancé's passing had more of an impact on her than her marriage to her ex-husband. She states that the lack of closure made her more vulnerable in relationships and that is probably how she was targeted by her partner who tricked her into becoming a drug mule.

Despite the varying reasons, most of the women except Participant 2 have a history of toxic relationships with their partners in the course of their lives. The only difference

is that in relation to when they became mules, the motivations vary in that only 1 participant was motivated by their spouses while for the others, it's the unpleasant remnants from their marriages that directed the paths that they later took in their lives.

### **6.3.5 Incarceration**

The majority of the participants have been incarcerated for being drug mules except for one participant. This finding speaks to the assertion that drug mules are vulnerable to victimisation because of the low-level role they play in the drug industry, which makes them dispensable. It can, therefore, be concluded that in accordance with Hübschle's (2014:43) opinion drug mules are easily replaced and serve as mere pawns in the international drug trade.

### **6.3.6 Drug Use**

Fleetwood and Haas (2011:197) found that it was common that drug mules agree to carry drugs in order to feed their habits or clear their debt to drug dealers. Hübschle (2014:44) states that in the case of South African drug mules, many were admittedly lured into becoming drug mules because of the drug addiction. Findings from this study contradict with the literature in that none of the participants reported that they used drugs except for one who admitted having dabbled in drugs recreationally.

### **6.3.7 Prospective Income**

Out of 7, only 3 participants had been paid for being drug mules on previous trips. The other 4 participants were never compensated. This research found that all the mules who had been compensated for a successful trip had been paid between R 15 000 – R 20 000 a trip. According to the participants, the monies they had been offered as compensation were all relatively high amounts for the participants, considering that some of the participants did not have jobs and those who did, were not paid salaries that amounted to the money they were promised as drug mules. As will be discussed in more detail below, findings from the study indicated that one of the predominant motivators for becoming a drug mule was economic in nature.

Sumter et al. (2017:13) assert that even though temporary, successful drug mules can make a lot of money which translates to mules developing a sense of power and boosted self-esteem. A majority of the participants who knowingly became mules mention that the money they stood to make was a strong motivator in their choice to become mules. Bjerk (2014:26) found that the more risk the mule incurred, the higher the compensation, and this was evident in the case of Participant 2 who admitted that her choice to become a mule was mainly because she would be remunerated with a consignment of drugs worth \$ 5000 which would, in the end, translate to a higher street value when sold.

### 6.3.8 Motivations for becoming a drug mule

There were four superordinate themes that emerged from this research identified in the table below, namely: socio-economic factors which dealt mostly with financial strain; relational factors, including relationships with romantic partners, family and friends and factors relating to the participants social functioning, such as life choices which dealt with female empowerment and excitement and lifestyle. Other indirect motivators were also identified. These dealt with victimisation, human trafficking, and being tricked and hoodwinked.

**TABLE 2: Summary of motivating factors for becoming a drug mule**

MOTIVATOR	P 1	P 2	P 3	P 4	P 5	P 6	P 7
Socio-economic factors	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
Relational factors	X	X	✓	✓	X	X	✓
Social functioning	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓
INDIRECT MOTIVATORS							



Nigerian organised drug traffickers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Victimisation	✓	X	X	X	X	X	✓

#### **6.3.8.1 Socio-Economic factors**

Unsurprisingly, all participants, with the exception of one, cited money as a motivating factor. Findings from the study concluded that participants were motivated by financial need to become drug mules knowingly or unknowingly. In the majority of cases, the reason was to provide for the financial needs of taking care of their families, children, and their necessary living expenses

It can furthermore be concluded that what participants perceive to be financial strain differs. For example, in the case of Participant 1, financial strain meant that sometimes she literally did not have any money to support herself and her children and that she had to rely on the people from her church for help with food and clothing donations.

None of the other participants experienced the level of financial strain as noted in the case of Participant 1. Participant 2, 4, 5 and 6 indicated that they needed money to care for family members. None the less, all of these participants have one or another form of financial support to assist them in this regard. In the case of Participant 2, even though she was dealing drugs, financial strain meant that the Participant needed money to take care of her family which included her siblings but most especially her mother who was a drug addict. However, she was by no means destitute. Participant 4 spoke of financial strain in relation to taking care of her children. Interestingly, even though Participant 4 was unemployed, her overarching need to take care of her children did not really warrant her agreeing to be a drug mule as her children were physically and financially cared for and supported by her ex-husband. The same could be said for Participant 5. The Participant spoke of being financially strained but also not for reasons that warranted her being a drug mule. The Participant was financially strained in that she did not manage her money well, and as such, she was often over-

indebted. Even though she experienced financial strain, it was not the primary motive for her becoming a drug mule. Participant 6, in turn, explained that her financial strain was caused by the fact that she could not afford to take care of her daughter because she did not earn enough. Despite that, she admits that her mother sometimes helped her by living with her daughter at some points in her life. So, similar to Participant 2, 4 and 5, one could say although she felt financially strained, she was not wholly stranded and helpless.

Findings from the study concur with Fleetwood (2015c:1), namely that women generally become drug mules due to financial strain, which is intensified by familial responsibilities which include caring for children and parents. In addition, Bailey (2013:121) concurs, stating that female involvement in drug smuggling is usually linked to stressful life circumstances often linked to financial need.

It can, therefore, be concluded that although financial strain was found to be a predominant motive for becoming a drug mule, it is of importance to view this perception through the lens of participant views. In other words, what the participants viewed as financial strains were relative and case specific.

With regards to the financial motive, it was interesting to note that none of the participants interviewed viewed being a drug mule as a long-term solution to their financial problems. Participant 2 was the only participant who was actively and willingly participating in the drug industry. The majority of the participants viewed being a drug mule as a short-term solution because they needed money in order to solve a problem they were experiencing at that particular time. None of them spoke of being a mule as a long-time career choice or solution to their problems. In fact, all the participants who were knowingly working as drug mules stated that their intention was for it to be a once-off occurrence. The participants who acted as drug mules more than once (Participant 3, 4 and 6) all indicated that their subsequent trips were motivated by factors other than financial reasons. For example, Participant 3's motive was less about the money and more about pleasing her husband. Participant 4 indicated that although her motive was initially financial, after the first trip, she was motivated by the lifestyle and the 'easy money' which afforded her more financial freedom. Lastly, Participant 6 admitted that the ease of the first trip and her poor money management skills led to

her taking the second trip, which would land her in prison. It can, therefore, be concluded that although social-economic factors are a predominant motive, it is seldom the sole motive but rather accompanied by secondary motives.

The majority of the participants were the primary caregivers to their children and/or were responsible for supporting their extended families financially. So, their financial motive directly relates to familial obligations which are a difficulty many South African women face. Further, except for two participants, all the participants come from low-income households where they were exposed to poverty. These circumstances influenced their potential to study and develop skills to become financially self-sufficient. This, together with the mentioned family obligations, influenced their choices primarily because of the limited options they perceived themselves to have to meet financial obligations.

In conclusion, although the primary motive for becoming a drug mule was socio-economic in nature, emanating sub-themes included perceived financial strain, life circumstances and obligations, unemployment, and poverty. It can furthermore be concluded that financial reasons are seldom the sole motive for women to become drug mules since it is was often driven by emotional and/or relational factors.

#### **6.3.8.2 Relational factors**

Except for two participants, all other participants came from disorganised and broken families characterised by weak or nonexistent parental involvement and support in their lives from childhood. This was primarily due to divorced parents or parents who were never together, never married, and/or absent. Only two participants admitted to having had happily married parents and what can be considered happy 'normal' childhoods. All of the participants have siblings even though some may not be from the same mother and father. This caused some instability in their upbringing particularly in the case of Participant 6, who highlighted the fact that being a product of an affair was hard on her and her siblings mainly because their father stayed with his other family nearby. As a result, this caused some anger in the participant because she could not understand how her father was able to be with his other kids fulltime but not with them. Participant 1 was also affected by growing up in a large family of many

siblings, all from different fathers. However, the participant did not internalise it unlike Participant 6, mainly because she never knew her father and neither did all her siblings except for one, so in effect, she could not lament for a person she had never met. In this regard, Farrington (2010:211) declares that a dysfunctional background can have a negative effect in that it hampers the development of pro-social values and norms inevitably heightening the risk of coming into conflict with the law.

Dysfunctional marital relationships are another motivating factor highlighted in the study. The dysfunctional nature of Participant 3's marital relationship is an example of marital discord being the motivating factor for her to agree to become a mule. By trying to maintain peace in the home and trying to please her husband, the participant rationalised that becoming his drug mule would somehow help win him over. Although Participant 7 states that at no stage did she know about her partner being a drug mule, she was also arrested for being a mule due to her romantic involvement with her boyfriend. Participant 3 is also adamant that despite her criminal proclivities, her involvement was mainly due to her emotional dependence and to some extent, coercion from her husband. In addition, most participants indicated that they were physically abused by their partners even though none of the participants linked their abuse to them being drug mules. Bailey (2013:136) however found in her research that women who experienced chaos in their lives as a result of domestic abuse, marginalization through poverty or harsh family dynamics are at risk of turning to crime as a result.

In addition, Theobald and Farrington (2013:404) surmise that people who come from broken homes may suffer from psychological neglect and experience behavioural issues which may eventually lead them to criminality and the tendency to associate with delinquent peers. This was noted in the case of both Participant 2 and 5 who found themselves associating with people, whom they perceived as being nurturing and caring but in the end, played a role in their motivation to become drug mules. In the case of Participant 2, it was her Nigerian boss and his wife, whilst with Participant 5, it was a close friend acting on behalf of her Nigerian friends. Participant 5 and 6 also became involved as drug mules because of their social networks. Participant 5 was recruited by her friend, whilst Participant 6 was recruited by friends of her child's father. In this regard, opportunities for becoming a drug mule were created through

friends and normalising of participation in the drug trade by close associates (Van San & Sikkens, 2017:348-349).

In terms of romantic relationships, family, and friends, it can be concluded that all the people who played a role in recruiting the participants as drug mules were people that the participants were comfortable with and trusted. In this regard, Hübschle (2014:39) underscores that in human trafficking, a victim's trust is an essential element, especially during their recruitment and also after recruitment in order to reduce the risk of escape. This is clearly evident in the case study of Participant 1. Be that as it may, even with the element of trust being evident in most of the relationships the participants formed with their recruiters, the participants did admit that they had agency in their decisions and thus made informed decisions in agreeing to be mules. It can, therefore, be concluded that relational responsibilities and/or pressures are a significant motivation for women to become drug mules.

The majority of the participants mentioned that they were under pressure to care for family members financially and/or emotionally. As such, they reasoned that they wanted to provide better lives for their families and for themselves. Likewise, Fleetwood (2010:6, 2015c:1) avows that research indicates that the predominant motivating factor given by women who were involved in drug trafficking was the financial strain and the need to be able to support their families. This concurs with the findings from the study. As mentioned above, the majority of participants mentioned their responsibility to care for their children as a motivating factor in their decision to become a drug mule. In this regard, Bailey (2013:121) states in her experience many female drug mules are aware of what they are carrying yet claim that the strain they experience from supporting their families motivates them to take a chance. Taking care of their children and families seemed to be an issue that made a choice to be drug mules 'easier.' It can, therefore, be concluded that family obligations are a significant motivating factor for women to become drug mules.

#### **6.3.8.3 Social functioning**

Findings from the study indicate that rational lifestyle choices were a motivating factor for some women to become drug mules. Participant 2 outright acknowledges that her

motives emanated from greed and a desire to make money and be wealthy. Martel (2013:29-30) claims that some Malaysian authorities avow that female drug mules are driven by greed and are mostly aware of what they are doing as their primary motivation is the pursuit of greed. For example, Participant 2 asserts that although she comes from dysfunctional family background, she maintains that her involvement in the crime was due to the fact that she was lured by the potential of making a lot of money in a short space of time without having to work in a laborious job. Also, she found working as a drug dealer intoxicating, she felt powerful being 'successful' in a male-dominated environment. Similarly, Participant 3 and 5 also indicated that they were motivated by feelings of empowerment and excitement. Burt and Simons (2013:1330) support this assertion stating that whilst economic gain is usually used as a reason to commit a crime, research has shown that some people are motivated by status, respect and the esteem gained from committing a crime. Hence some individuals get involved in drugs and also find it hard to get out of the drug game because according to Collins (2018:1) the lure of money and the respect associated with it is a significant motivating factor for them. This is further supported by Fleetwood (2010:8) who argued that many women involved in the drug industry achieved status and empowerment from their involvement.

This motive contradicts the opinion that women become drug mules because of poverty. Although some do, the lure and thrill of easy money and power is also a strong motivator. Sumter et al. (2017:9) also found that some women choose to be involved as mules to support their 'party lifestyles' or to keep up with the standards of some of their friends and family. It can, therefore, be concluded that lifestyle factors, such as easy disposable income and feelings of empowerment and excitement are other factors motivating women to be drug mules.

#### **6.3.8.4 Indirect motivators**

##### **→ Organised Drug Trafficking Syndicates**

A predominant theme that emerged in the study is the role that Nigerian drug traffickers played in the recruitment of all of the participants. Although not a direct motive, the modus operandi of these drug traffickers served to create an enabling environment for

participants to be drug mules. Findings from the study indicated that Nigerian drug traffickers were either involved in the employment of participants as drug mules, or in the drug transactions. In this instance, Participant 1 was recruited by bogus Nigerian pastors, Participant 2 by her drug-dealing Nigerian associates, Participant 3 by her own husband, a Nigerian, Participant 4 by her sister who was working together with her Nigerian boyfriend, Participant 5 by her friend and her Nigerian friends who had initially solicited her, Participant 6 by a Nigerian couple who were friends of her ex-husband and lastly Participant 7, although duped by her boyfriend, mentioned that the drug merchandise her boyfriend made her carry was picked up from a Nigerian man. The role that organised drug trafficking syndicates play in the recruitment of women to become drug mules is recognised as a significant indirect motive for women to become drug mules. It is viewed as an indirect motive because of the unwillingly forced participation and/or coercion of women to become drug mules which are characteristic of these syndicates' modus operandi. Findings from this study correlate with the research discussed below.

Martel (2013:20-21) underscored the fact that West African Drug Syndicates (WADS) actively recruit women for the sole intention of being drug mules on the internet or through personal contacts. Luong (2015:39) adds that the syndicates usually court women and ultimately persuade them to become their de-facto spouses later convincing them to become drug mules, which is their known modus operandi. When it comes to the recruitment of African women, Luong (2015:40) claims that the WADS actively seek out HIV infected women because when apprehended most Asian countries would deport them back home as they do not want to deal with prisoners who have HIV/AIDS or other contagious, infectious diseases. For this research, this particular assertion cannot be tested, as the participants were never asked any questions regarding their HIV statuses.

In South Africa what the WADS have been known to do is target airline crew by offering them up to three times their salary, or luring women on social media and gaining their trust and ultimately using them to smuggle drugs (Van Heerden, 2014:82). The Nigerian government are aware of the problem, and in response together with the European Union and UNODC, various programmes aimed at addressing drug-related crimes and drug demand reduction have been developed (UNODC, 2015:np).

#### **6.3.8.5 *Victimisation***

Two of the participants were victims of trickery which duped them into becoming drug mules. Fleetwood (2010:7) maintains that women who reported being tricked were usually victimised by the use of the threats or being coerced. Participant 1 was tricked into believing that she was employed to import carpets by leaders of the church she attended; people she looked up to and trusted. In this instance, it is a clear case of victimisation and what can be perceived to be human trafficking, as discussed in chapter 3 of the study. Her socio-economic circumstances made her an easy target to trick and coerce.

Another example is in the case of Participant 7 who was tricked by her boyfriend whom she trusted and assumed she had a future with. She had a history of abusive ex-partners, so she was easy to coerce when she found a man who seemed kind. She accepts that although his offer seemed too good to be true, at that time, her unsatisfactory life situation made accepting the offer of a free holiday an easy one. Until they were physically stopped and arrested at the airport, the participant says she did not know or suspect anything, especially with it being the second trip she had taken with her boyfriend. When she confronted him, he admitted to knowingly tricking her because he claims, had he told her the truth; she would not have agreed. There is a lacuna in the literature regarding people who have been unknowingly hoodwinked into becoming drug mules. Notwithstanding this, Martel (2013:30), reports that authorities in the Philippines have noticed a growing pattern of women being hoodwinked into becoming mules and acknowledging this trend the government took a stance to protect these women by viewing them as victims instead of culprits. It can, therefore, be concluded that it is essential to assess the causal factors that motivate women to become drug mules in order to prevent victims of coercion and/or human trafficking being treated as perpetrators.

### **6.4 MULTI-DIMENSIONAL NATURE OF FACTORS MOTIVATING WOMEN TO BECOME DRUG MULES**

The multi-dimensional nature of motivation to become a drug mule is a significant theme in the study. In this regard the motives for becoming drug mule highlighted in this study were varied and focused on similar motives that appeared repeatedly in the



case studies, even though in some instances, it felt more like justifications than motivations.

It is concluded in the study that motivation cannot be reduced to one single factor, because as found in this study, there is usually a multiplicity of reasons that influence women to become drug mules. Bailey (2013:118) concedes that women commit crimes for various reasons and that poverty or financial hardships are not always the only motivating factor. Findings in this study highlighted the significant role relational and lifestyle factors play in association with economic factors.

Although the majority of participants became drug mules through their own volition, the circumstances that motivated them are complex. None the less finding from this study contradict a large cohort of research which, has always focused on women as victims or unwilling participants (Sumter et al., 2017:7; Fleetwood & Seal, 2017:360; Martel 2013:25). Although there are examples of such victims in this research, there are other examples that demonstrate that women exercise agency and were merely responding to opportunities to achieve their goals, be it financial freedom or a life choice.

Although the study consisted of a small sample of women, the in-depth analysis through case studies has highlighted the complex nature of factors that motivates women to become drug mules. Motivating factors to be a drug mule consist of personal, social, and psychological factors that constantly interrelate with each other. As such, the findings have provided valuable insight into the motivations of women drug mules. All the participants have unique stories which prove how subjective life is as everyone's motive was based on their own lived experience and their perceptions which in turn determined their motivation. The accounts that were shared by the participants showed how financial strain, unemployment, disrupted family structure and lack of support could play a role in driving decisions made by these women. Bailey (2013:121) suggests that drug smuggling research has shown that stressful life circumstances can indeed propel women into a life of crime.

When it comes to women and crime as identified in this research, it is concluded that even in constrained circumstances, women still have some sense of agency, and they

do make intentional choices. Bailey (2013:121) found that women drug mules in Barbados cite poverty, abuse, emotional dependence, greed, and excitement as the reason for being mules whereas Klein (2009:392) in his study contends that Nigerian drug mules, although uneducated, were not naïve and were neither duped nor manipulated. Instead, they made intentional choices about being mules in order to better their lives and those around them. Overall, a variety of reasons was given by the participants for becoming drug mules. None of the participants chose to be a drug mule as a career option. All the participants were motivated by circumstances, some unforeseen, some self-serving and some because of lack of other perceived viable options. Within the context of this study, it is concluded that it is vital to be cognisant of the multi-motivational nature of reasons why women become drug mules in order to prevent and manage this phenomenon effectively.

## **6.5 RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.5.1 Further research**

The recruitment of females as drug mules is an under-researched field. The lack of information from the government departments and agencies is alarming, particularly regarding information of how many South Africans are imprisoned abroad and in South Africa specifically for being drug mules. Moreover, the scarcity of data prevents researchers from learning more about female drug mules in South Africa which in turn prevents society from learning and understanding how women are recruited as mules, and the dangers of women being drug mules. This ultimately prevents the implementation of informed strategies for the prevention and management of such activities.

Most of the research available is country-specific and as such cannot be generalised. That being said, the stories as told by the participants have helped shed some light on understanding what motivates South African women to become drug mules. It is therefore recommended that a similar study with a more representative sample should be conducted.

### **6.5.2 Awareness campaigns**

It is recommended that awareness campaigns should be launched in communities and schools to warn people, more especially women, about the dangers and consequences of being recruited as drug mules. William's (2008:25) research confirmed that there was a drop in Nigerian women arrested in the United Kingdom for being drug mules after the launch of such informational campaigns in Nigeria. It is therefore recommended that these information campaigns should specifically target vulnerable persons, such as women due to systemic power imbalances and the prevailing patriarchal culture in South Africa.

### **6.5.3 Keeping of accurate statistics and a database**

Van Heerden and Minnaar (2015:3) argue that there is limited information available on drug-related crime and the drug trafficking trade from the SAPS annual crime statistic reports. The researcher personally found this to be true. Case in point is that if media reports about drug mules are compared, it is notable that each one will cite different statistics and information. The question can therefore be asked, how it is possible to develop effective reaction and prevention strategies if the nature and extent of the problem are unknown? It is therefore recommended that for statistical purposes, a concerted effort should be made to develop a system whereby accurate categorised records can be kept of persons who are apprehended and imprisoned for different drug crimes such as being drug mules.

### **6.5.4 Training programmes for criminal practitioners and law enforcement agents**

It is recommended that criminal justice practitioners and law enforcement agents dealing with cases related to drug mules need specialised training to deal with drug mules. This is to ensure that they are aware of the multi-dimensional nature of causation and motivation to assure that all factors are taken into consideration during adjudication. It is recommended that case-specific assessment should be used as a good practice to ensure that every case is treated and dealt with in its own merit.

### **6.5.5 Cross-border collaboration between law enforcement agencies**

It is recommended that there should be an active cross-border collaboration between law enforcement agencies to deal with organised drug smuggling syndicates. Furthermore, the government must enact a robust and comprehensive, high-impact

plan. This plan must offer a multi-pronged approach which involves all relevant government departments and stakeholders.

#### **6.5.6 Interventions to address societal causal risk factors**

Community-based intervention programmes should be established to address the socio-economic factors that motivate women to become drug-mules. This can be achieved by looking at best practice from countries with comparable problems such as Vietnam, Mexico, and America.

### **6.6 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

What this research has shown is that women's motivations for being drug mules are complex and relative. What may be perceived as an issue to one person may not be viewed as such by another. Female motivations for involvement as mules are driven by various social and personal interactions. The case studies presented in this study prove that women do not all experience life in the same way.

The primary aim of this research was to understand what motivates females to become drug mules. The use of case studies and criminological theories was used in order to explore this question fully. Chapter 1 dealt with the introduction of the research topic and what motivated the research. Chapter 2 presented an overview and discussed drug trafficking in a global context, and also included drug trafficking in the South African context. This chapter consisted of information and statistics of the global drug trade, the war against drugs, the drug laws and penalization including the South African drug trade and drug mules in the South African context against the backdrop of the global drug market. The information provided showed the war against drugs is not something that can be abandoned in the near future simply because drug trafficking is a lucrative business, the upshot of which spreads far and wide thus ensuring that it cannot be easily eradicated. Furthermore, the drug industry is continuously evolving with new smuggling methods and new drugs being manufactured frequently. What also came out in chapter 2 is that drug mules are really a minuscule component in the global drug spectrum. The drug laws and penalisation seem to be harsh against mules which is problematic as it does not deal with the drug problem as the manufacturers and distributors are seldom caught. This highlights the

dangers that drug mules face with regard to being apprehended, as the harsh sentences have not proven to be a clear deterrent if statics are anything to go by. For the participants that took part in this research, the sentences were a good enough deterrent. However, because the drug trade is made up of different groups that range in size, it makes sense that there will always be a need for drug mules for those consortiums which are not very big players in the industry.

An understanding of the causality and motivations of female mules was also presented in chapter 3. The following elements were identified in the literature as some of the motives why females choose to be drug mules: financial and economic strain; romantic partnerships; lifestyle choices, empowerment, and excitement as well as emotional dependence. Lastly, victimization was another motivation for becoming a mule. Victimization of drug mules falls into various categories such as abuse and coercion in the form of human trafficking as seen in case study 1. Victimization in the form of obligation was seen in case study 3 whilst being tricked, swindled, hoodwinked, and deceived was evident in case study 7. Other women were victimised into being mules, and the victimisation involved being tricked including some form of coercion. Those who were victimised did say that money played a specific role which in turn led them to be victimised.

Additionally, chapter 3 examined criminological theories that could be used to understand better what motivates women to become drug mules. This was done with the help of the Walter Reckless' Containment Theory, the Neutralization Theory, the Social Identity Theory, Rational Choice Theory and Lifestyle Theory in order to better understand why women made this choice and what motivated them.

Chapter 4 explained the research methodology employed in the research. The reason for the chosen research method was dictated by the number of participants who chose to take part in the research.

Chapter 5 presented the 7 case studies which were collected through the use of recorded interviews with participants. The participants were able to tell their own stories from their own points of view through the use of semi-structured questions.

Chapter 6 discussed the recommendations, and conclusion of the research.

In summary, the research found that the main reason many women were motivated to be involved was due to some sort of financial strain, whether short or long term. The women believed that money would solve their immediate problems so they, in turn, did not give much thought to the consequences of their actions. None of the women mentioned the repercussions of being a mule. Instead, they spoke more about what they would be able to do with the money from mule work, thus putting emphasis on their short-term goals and needs rather than the illegitimacy of their conduct and its potential repercussions.

Out of the 7 case studies, 2 participants expressed their participation was a lifestyle and empowerment choice. This highlighted the importance of an individual's social networks and family associations. From the research, the women who cited that being a drug mule was some form of lifestyle choice and empowerment mentioned that their involvement was mainly because of their criminal associates and their exposure to family and partners that were already involved in the drug trade. That being said, there was one overarching theme that emerged from this research, which is the involvement of Nigerians. In every single case study, Nigerians were involved in either running the drug business, recruitment, or facilitation of the transactions. The implications and available literature regarding the involvement of Nigerians were discussed above together with other pertinent findings.

In closing, with regards to the research enquiry, the women in this research were motivated to become drug mules for a variety of reasons, the predominant one being financial circumstances. Remarkably, in all case studies, the women were sent, they had accomplices, or they were instructed even though some made informed decisions to be involved in the offence. Although none of the women admitted to actively seeking out mule work - or running their own syndicate with their own product using their own contacts – they recognised their agency to varying degrees. All of them were considered employees in one way or the other, which speaks to the fact that women become drug mules as a means to an end rather than by choice as their choices are usually informed by their life circumstances. For the researcher to be able to produce credible research the research had to delve deeper into the reasoning behind why

these women choose to do what they did by listening to their life stories. As Van Heerden and Minnaar (2015:10) opine, the drug market - or drug demand - will remain interchangeable with drug supply. Simply put, where there is demand, there will always be a need for supply, which means that ultimately drug mules will always be sought in order to meet demand for their drug businesses.

This research does not represent the motives of all female drug mules in South Africa as it was naturally limited to a small number of women who voluntarily participated. Despite this limitation, the research provided valuable information on a topic currently under-researched in South Africa, thereby underscoring the need for future research to understand the complex nature of female drug mules, and to develop effective policies and practices that can possibly provide a pro-active response to the phenomena. By examining female drug mules globally, the commonly shared narrative found amongst the majority of participants demonstrated that their pathways into criminality were often linked and contextualised in relation to aspiring to better their lives and the lives of their loved ones - sometimes at the expense of their lives and freedom. Finally, this research developed an improved understanding of overlapping motivations through the participants narration of their multifaceted life stories, intersected with other life circumstances.

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## APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE



### CAES HEALTH RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Date: 10/09/2018

Dear Ms Klein

NHREC Registration # : REC-170616-051  
REC Reference # : 2018/CAES/106  
Name : Ms LPM Klein  
Student #: 35370106

**Decision: Ethics Approval from  
06/09/2018 to 31/08/2019**

**Researcher(s):** Ms LPM Klein  
[35370106@mylife.unisa.ac.za](mailto:35370106@mylife.unisa.ac.za)

**Supervisor (s):** Prof M Schoeman  
[schoemi@unisa.ac.za](mailto:schoemi@unisa.ac.za); 012-433-9491

#### **Working title of research:**

Female perpetrator motives for becoming drug mules

**Qualification:** MA Criminology

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the Unisa CAES Health Research Ethics Committee for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for a one-year period. After one year the researcher is required to submit a progress report, upon which the ethics clearance may be renewed for another year.

**Due date for progress report: 31 August 2019**

*Please note the points below for further action:*

1. The Committee is satisfied with the explanation of the relationship between the researcher and the participants, as well as with the supervisor and student's experience in handling such topics. The Committee suggests that the supervisor accompany the student on a pilot interview, and provide a report to the Committee afterwards. Should the supervisor feel comfortable that the student can handle the following interviews on her own, she can indicate such in the report and allow the student to continue.



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2. The consent form does not indicate the participation of the supervisor in the interviews. Should the supervisor decide to attend all the interviews, this should be added to the consent form. Furthermore, the consent form states that participants will be referred to a psychiatrist or counsellor, should they wish to be. The Committee advises that the wording be amended to rather state that participants will be "advised" about possible psychiatrists or counsellors they could use. The researchers should provide a number of options, but it should remain the participants' choice which of those they want to use.

*The **medium risk application** was **reviewed** by the CAES Health Research Ethics Committee on 06 September 2018 in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.*

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the Committee.
3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing, accompanied by a progress report.
5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data require additional ethics clearance.
7. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

**Note:**

*The reference number **2018/CAES/106** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Yours sincerely,

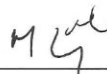


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**Prof MJ Linington**

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## APPENDIX B: REPORT ATTESTING TO RESEARCHER COMPETENCY



Date: 10/10/2018

NHREC Registration # : REC-170616-051

Dear Prof E Kempen

REC Reference # : 2018/CAES/106

Name : Ms LPM Klein

Student # : 35370106

### REPORT: PILOT INTERVIEW

**Researcher(s):** Ms LPM Klein  
35370106@mylife.unisa.ac.za

**Supervisor (s):** Prof M Schoeman  
[schoemi@unisa.ac.za](mailto:schoemi@unisa.ac.za)  
012-433-9491

**Working title of research:** Female perpetrator motives for becoming drug mules

**Qualification:** MA Criminology

The pilot interview took place on 28 September 2018 at the researcher's office, which was the mutually agreed upon venue. The venue was a safe and confidential environment.

Candidate Klein commenced with explaining the participant's rights and obligations during the interview. The explanation was done in the participant's vernacular language. The participant, who is also fluent in English, signed the informed consent form. I was requested to sign a confidentiality agreement.

The researcher took time to make the participant feel comfortable and to create rapport. Adequate time was given to the participant to tell her story. Candidate Klein was attentive and supportive during the interview. Even though she followed the interview schedule there was a natural flow in conversation between researcher and participant. Candidate Klein clarified answers and made use of follow-up questions during the interview.

As supervisor, I am satisfied of candidate Klein's skills and ability to conduct the data collection interviews. We agreed that she will give me feedback after each interview. These debriefing sessions will, amongst other purposes, serve to ensure that interviews are conducted in an ethical manner.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M Schoeman", is written over a horizontal line.

Prof M Schoeman

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## **APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

The respondents are a diverse group of female drug mules. Some of the women have served sentences for being drug mules. The participants may change as possibly they no longer wish to participate. Real names will **not** be used during the interview process - only aliases. All interviews will be tape-recorded. Some personal details may be modified to protect the respondent's confidentiality. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted, demarcated into the following phases:

### **PHASE 1 – WARM-UP**

1. Research participants will be asked to share some insight into their lives. These life stories include earliest memories of childhood, living conditions, family composition as a child, significant experiences, important and influential moments.

### **PHASE 2 – EXPLORE DISCUSSION POINTS**

2. **What** factors in your childhood or adulthood do you think played a role in your involvement? **Why** did the participant decide to get involved? What was the defining moment?
3. How did the participant get into the business or how were they recruited?
4. Has the participant ever been involved in crime before becoming a drug mule?
5. Do you think you were specifically targeted? Why?

### **PHASE 3 – CORE DISCUSSION**

6. What role has their family, partner or friend played in their involvement as drug mules?
7. What are their significant memories and/or experiences as drug mules?
8. What are/were their motivations for getting involved: Economic gain? Romantic relationships? Empowerment/status? Victimisation? Childhood Experiences? Abuse? Addiction? Criminal motivation?



9. What are the financial rewards?

10. Was it worth the risk?

#### **PHASE 4 - SUMMARISING**

11. What are the participants **current** living conditions and employment status?

12. After all, is said and done, was it all worth it? Highlights? Lowlights?

13. In retrospect, knowing what you know now, what would you change and/or do differently?

## **APPENDIX D: INFORMED CONSENT LETTER AND CONSENT FORM**

PO Box 510

Newlands

Pretoria

0049

<Date>

Dear Participant

My name is Lucy Pearl Klein. I am a student at the University of South Africa, (UNISA). As a requirement to complete my degree towards an MA in Criminology at the University of South Africa, I will be conducting a research project. You are invited to participate in a study titled female perpetrator motives for becoming drug mules.

### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

I am conducting this research to explore South African women's' experiences working as drug mules, as limited research on this topic is indicated. The purpose of this research is to provide a greater understanding of factors motivating women to act as a drug mule.

### **WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?**

You are invited to participate in the study because of your experience working as a drug mule. You were asked to participate because you are known to me and agreed to participate. Your contact details were obtained with your permission from another participant. There will be a minimum of five (5) research participants; however, the number may increase as the research progresses.

## **WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?**

You will be interviewed solely by me. The interview will focus on your experiences, perceptions and opinion about women who act as drug mules. Questions about your experiences while working as a drug mule, and what motivated you to become a drug mule will also be asked. The interviews will be carried out in one session, with the session lasting approximately two (2) hours. The interviews may require a second session, and if needs be an additional interview may be arranged. The interviews will be audio-recorded with your permission for the researcher to capture all data accurately. Pseudonyms will be used during the interview to protect your identity. This implies that no identifying particulars that could link you to the audio-recording, or interview in general, will be recorded. If it is determined that more information is needed, the interview time may be extended, subject to your approval and availability.

## **CAN I WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY EVEN AFTER HAVING AGREED TO PARTICIPATE?**

Participation in this study is voluntary, and you are under no obligation to consent to participate. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time and do not need to give a reason for your decision. All data will be destroyed and not used in the study if you should choose to withdraw from the study.

## **WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**

The primary benefits are to the scientific community and the Criminological and Victimological Society of Southern Africa (CRIMSA) for the development of knowledge in the field of feminist criminology. The benefits to you as a participant might be the fact that you get an opportunity to tell your story, which might be useful to other women in the prevention of similar crimes.

## **ARE THERE ANY NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR ME IF I PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT?**

You may find aspects of this interview uncomfortable and distressing, as the topic of the research will delve into a personal area of your private life that you may not like to be known. This research may have the potential to cause undesired changes in thought processes and emotion which may result in experiencing depression, feelings of stress or guilt and psychological distress. You will be referred to a psychologist or counsellor, should you wish to be. In the event of the above, you are advised to immediately stop the interview whereby you can decide whether to answer and withdraw from the study.

### **WILL THE INFORMATION THAT I CONVEY TO THE RESEARCHER AND MY IDENTITY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?**

You have the right to anonymity and confidentiality. Your name will not be recorded anywhere, and no one will be able to connect you to the answers you give. Your answers will be provided with a pseudonym, and you will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings. My research supervisor and I are the only persons who will have access to the transcribed interviews and will to the best of our ability to take all foreseeable steps to ensure that the information remains confidential. Your anonymity and confidentiality will be protected in a similar manner, as described previously as your identity will only be known to the researcher.

### **HOW WILL THE RESEARCHER PROTECT THE SECURITY OF DATA?**

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a digital safe. For future research or academic purposes, all electronic information will be stored on a password-protected computer.

Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. After five years, hard copies will be shredded, and electronic copies will be permanently deleted from the hard drive of the computer using a relevant software programme.

## **WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?**

There is no compensation or remuneration for this study, and all participation is voluntary.

## **HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICS APPROVAL?**

This study received written approval from the CAES Health Research Ethics Committee, Unisa. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher.

## **HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS/RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH?**

Findings from the study will be available after completion of the examination process. Should you wish to be informed of the final research findings, require any further information, or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact Lucy Pearl Klein, Cell phone Number: +27 82 96 452, Email address: 35370106@myunisa.ac.za.

Should you have concerns about the way in which the research was conducted, you may contact Professor Marelize Schoeman, Department of Criminology and Security Science, College of Law, University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa, Telephone Number: +27 12 433 9491, E-Mail: schoemi@unisa.ac.za. Alternatively, contact the research ethics chairperson Prof E.L Kempen at kempeel@unisa.ac.za Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

Yours sincerely

---

Lucy Pearl Mpho Klein

## CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I, the undersigned, confirm that (please circle box as appropriate):

1. I have read and understood the information about the project, as provided in the Information Sheet dated \_\_\_\_\_.
2. I was provided with the opportunity to ask questions about the project and my participation. YES / NO
3. I voluntarily agree to participate in the project. YES / NO
4. I understand I can withdraw at any time without giving reasons and that I will not be penalised for withdrawing, nor will I be questioned on why I have withdrawn. YES / NO
5. The procedures regarding confidentiality were clearly explained (e.g. use of names, codes, pseudonyms, etc.) to me. YES / NO
6. If applicable, separate terms of consent for interviews, audio, video or other forms of data collection were explained and provided to me. YES / NO
7. The use of the data in research, publications, sharing and archiving has been explained to me. YES / NO
8. I understand that other researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the data and if they agree to the terms I have specified in this form. YES / NO
9. Select only one of the following:
  - I would like my name used and understand what I have said or written as part of this study will be used in reports, publications and other research output so that anything I have contributed to this project can be recognised. YES / NO
  - I do not want my name used in this research YES / NO
10. I, along with the Researcher, agree to sign and date this informed consent form. YES / NO

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (participant name), confirm that the researcher asking my consent to take part in this research study has told me about the nature, procedure,

potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience I can expect if I participate in the study.

I have been informed (in writing and orally) and understand the purpose of the study and what will be expected of me. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified. I agree with the recording of the interviews.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname..... (please print)

Participant Signature..... Date.....

Researcher's Name & Surname.....Lucy Pearl Klein

Researcher's signature..... Date.....

## APPENDIX E: TURNITIN REPORT

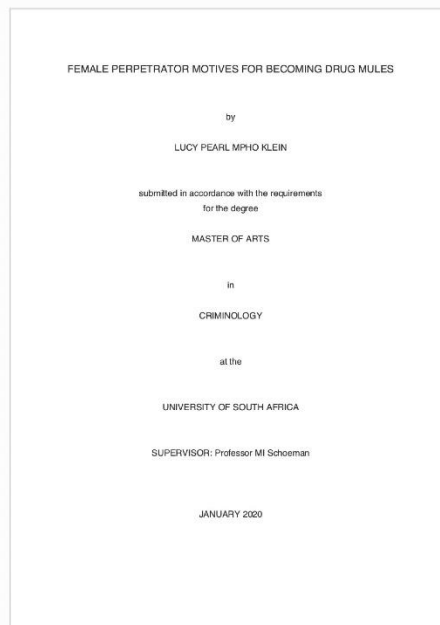


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## APPENDIX F: CONFIRMATION OF ENGLISH EDITING

### *CONFIRMATION OF ENGLISH EDITING*

To whom it may concern

This is to certify that the thesis with the title **“THE MOTIVES OF FEMALE PERPETRATORS FOR BECOMING DRUG MULES”**, submitted for examination by LUCY PEARL MPH O KLEIN, was edited for language under my hand. Neither the research content nor the researcher's intentions were altered in anyway during the editing process.

I applied standard United Kingdom English language conventions during the editing process. I stand by the quality of the English language in this document, provided my amendments have been accepted and further changes made to the document have been submitted to me for review.

Dr MG Karels

  
karelsmg@outlook.com